PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY

Implementation of Voter-Approved Amendment 9

Testimony before the
Select Committee on Constitutional Amendment Implementation
The Florida Senate

January 10, 2003

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the record, I am Nancy Keenan, the Education Policy Director for People For the American Way. We have more than 35,000 members in Florida, and we were a leading partner in the Coalition's effort to bring the issue of smaller classes to a vote of the people. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today and discuss the challenges and opportunities you have in meeting the needs of Florida's children.

For many years, People For has been a strong advocate for adopting proven reforms that help ensure that all of America's children receive a quality education. I have witnessed this challenge from almost every possible vantage point—from inside the classroom and from the legislative arena. I have been a teacher and a member of the Montana House of Representatives. For 12 years, I served as Montana's elected state superintendent of schools, and I have been a business owner.

Having sat in your position, I know and appreciate the daunting task you face in implementing complex ballot initiatives. It calls for your understanding of school finance, the challenges local districts face, and the tough policy questions at the state level. Most importantly, it calls for your patience, persistence and honest willingness to heed the will of the voters.

Congressman Meek has explained very eloquently that there are reasonable options that the Legislature has in fully funding Amendment 9. I'd like to take the next step by outlining the four key principles that should guide legislators in completing their mission by implementing Amendment 9 appropriately.

The first principle is equity. **Equity** means three things. First and foremost, the state has a fundamental responsibility to adequately fund the base level of state aid that every school district receives. Amendment 9 should not be used as an excuse to deny this funding to all Florida districts. Secondly, equity demands that additional state dollars be allocated to those districts with overcrowded classrooms. Since Amendment 9's purpose was to alleviate this overcrowding, these additional resources are critical in meeting that goal. Unfortunately, Gov. Bush is taking a *procedural* approach to fund Amendment 9, instead of a *goal-based* approach. Real equity means that a first grader—whether that child lives in Calhoun, Broward or Collier counties—should be learning in a classroom with no more than 18 students. This is an important principle of which legislators must not lose sight.

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Finally, equity also demands that *all* public school students be covered by the protections in Amendment 9. In this vein, we are troubled that the Governor's plan would create a large and growing loophole by exempting charter schools from Amendment 9. Even though charter schools legally remain public schools, Gov. Bush's plan would deny some 50,000 children in these schools the benefits of smaller classes. This would create a cruel loophole and serve as a slap in the face to the voters, who wanted to limit class sizes in every public school, not just some of them.

Clarity is the second key principle that should guide this body. The first step in the Governor's plan calls for clarifying definitions and setting ground rules. As always, the devil is in the details. Gov. Bush's plan focuses on a formula definition and relies on "district average" class sizes in a way that obscures the central mandate of Amendment 9. The Governor's approach may only mask reality, as averages often do. If you stick one leg in ice-cold water and the other leg in boiling-hot water, on average you're pretty comfortable. Amendment 9 itself clarifies the real goal, which is to *"reduce the average number of students in each classroom by at least two students per year until the maximum number of students per classroom do not exceed the requirements of this subsection."* The goal is clear.

Another important part of clarity requires that the Legislature and local school districts have the right information to act on. After all, you can't make good policy with bad data. The state is relying on pupil-teacher ratios for its data, and numerous educators have explained repeatedly how these figures can understate the problem by counting counselors, librarians and other non-teaching staff. The Committee should support efforts by local school districts to collect data on actual class sizes in each of their schools. Parents and the public have a right to know in much clearer terms—and so do you—where the problem of overcrowding classrooms is greatest.

Flexibility is the third key principle to help achieve smaller classes in which Florida's children can achieve at higher levels. The responsibility of providing flexibility to districts in the implementation of class size rests first with the state. This Committee should request from the state Department of Education a list of specific recommendations that could be implemented by the department to support school districts in their class-size reduction efforts. Some of these might require legislation, others might be handled by the State Board of Education. Either way, the expectation should be that the state is a partner in the implementation, not a hindrance.

Many of the other recommendations listed in the flexibility section of Gov. Bush's plan are already options available to schools under their local governance structure. One of the few new options offered by the Governor—local voucher plans—would lead school districts down a misguided path. Students who use vouchers to exit public schools take with them critical dollars needed to cover the fixed, overhead costs of public schools: paying teachers and other staff, keeping the lights on, buying the computers, and keeping the school buses running. Local voucher plans would leave public schools more financially strapped than they already are. Even if financial concerns were not an issue, private schools lack sufficient capacity to take all of the students needed to meet the class size limits in Amendment 9.

Once the Legislature delivers Amendment 9 funding to school districts with overcrowded schools, your guidance to district officials should be to direct these funds to those schools that are most in need. This is not a new concept. From the federal level, Title I dollars are distributed to a school district with priority given to high-poverty, low-performing schools.

Finally, **accountability** is the fourth key principle that should guide the Legislature. The question we must ask when this process is concluded is this: Are the dollars you have allocated being spent to reduce class sizes, as opposed to permitting school districts to spend them on any purpose they may deem appropriate? Amendment 9 speaks to those school districts that *exceed* the maximum number of students per classroom. Thus, funding for Amendment 9 should be directed in a way that it reaches districts with overcrowded schools. These funds should not benefit school districts that are already meeting the goal.

The second element of accountability is to examine the short- and long-term impact of Amendment 9's smaller classes. We encourage you to involve education organizations, parents' groups and other citizens to develop a model to assess Florida's experience by studying trends in areas such as test scores, retention rates, student behavior, attendance, teacher satisfaction and parental involvement.

In closing, let me say again that I recognize the gravity of your mission. I recognize that there are many of you who look at Amendment 9 and see the challenge of your lives. But, if it's any consolation, some of Florida's most vulnerable citizens are facing the challenge of *their* lives—trying their best to learn in crowded classrooms throughout the state. We want to work cooperatively with you to help ensure that *all* children have an education environment in which they can learn and succeed.

Thank you.

AN URGENT CRISIS, AN EFFECTIVE AND AFFORDABLE REMEDY

Amendment 9: The Campaign to Reduce Class Size and Put Florida's Children First

A Joint Report by:

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THE CRISIS

Florida ranks 49th in high school graduation rates.

Florida ranks 50th in per-capita spending on education.

Florida ranks 44th in student-teacher ratios.

Florida ranks 46th in SAT scores.

**Over the last three years,
Florida's ranking has fallen
in per-capita education spending,
graduation rates, and SAT scores,
while class sizes have increased.**

INTRODUCTION

Bold and Affordable Action for Florida's Future

Florida's overcrowded classrooms are hurting our students and our state.

Amendment 9, the class-size reduction ballot initiative, gives Florida voters a chance to address an urgent need and correct a persistent failure of leadership. It gives us the opportunity to make education a top priority in reality and not just in rhetoric. Passing Amendment 9 will be a dramatic act by the people of Florida, a profoundly pro-education and pro-opportunity step forward for Florida's children. It will also be a major pro-business, anti-crime investment in Florida's future that will strengthen our workforce and our economy.

The evidence is overwhelming that reducing class size is among the most effective and most cost-effective ways to strengthen schools. *(See Appendix A for selected resources on the documented benefits of smaller class sizes.)*

Making needed investments in smaller classes is well within Florida's financial means. We need to approach this very achievable priority with the commitment and imagination it deserves.

Public education is a fundamental democratic institution. Generations of immigrants have been ushered into American society through the schoolhouse doors. In an increasingly diverse country, public schools are where the next generations of Americans learn to live and work together. And in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, strong public schools that provide students with essential knowledge and skills are vital to our economic future and our democratic values.

Unfortunately, an understanding of the critical role played by public schools has not led to consistent policies that create and sustain strong schools for our children. Florida's elected leaders have too often made education a bigger priority while campaigning than while governing. With insufficient resources devoted to our schools, expectations and achievement have been allowed to fall into a spiral of diminished performance and opportunity. As a result, many public schools have been allowed to decay, and too many children are denied a meaningful chance at becoming full participants in our society.

This problem is especially acute in Florida, where nearly half of all students who enter ninth grade do not graduate from high school.[1] Florida's students struggle in some of the nation's most crowded classrooms and rank among the nation's worst in academic performance. News reports indicate that some students reporting for school this August have found themselves in classes of more than 50 students.[2] In spite of this dire situation, the state's per capita spending on education ranks last—50th among the states.[3]

This is an extraordinary crisis calling for an extraordinary and comprehensive response. It requires creativity and dedication in how we recruit, train and support quality teachers. And it requires that we take long overdue steps to deal with overcrowded classrooms and the devastating toll they take on Florida's schoolchildren.

Repeated efforts to have the Legislature deal with classroom overcrowding have unfortunately failed. Florida's elected leaders have not kept faith with our children. That is why parents, teachers, and other community leaders have launched a campaign to put caps on class size into the Florida Constitution.

Amendment 9 addresses the issue of overcrowded classrooms in Florida by requiring the state to provide adequate funding to limit the number of students in public school classrooms to 18 for pre-kindergarten through third grade, 22 for fourth through eighth grade, and 25 for high school.[4] These reductions would be phased in over an eight-year period. Amendment 9 puts the responsibility for funding reduced class sizes on the Legislature, not on local school districts. Legislators would have a range of funding options to consider. The issue is not whether the state can afford smaller classes but whether the state can afford the grim costs of overcrowding: low achievement, high dropout rates, increased crime, and a shortage of skilled workers.

Earlier this year, a *St. Petersburg Times-Miami Herald* poll asked the public to name the "most important" issues to address in public education. Two of the top three responses were reducing class size and strengthening "classroom discipline"—the latter of which, research shows, is improved by class-size reduction.[5] In this poll, a large majority of Floridians supported the class-size initiative that is now certified for the November 5 ballot as Amendment 9.[6] This overwhelming support reflects the public's willingness to invest in our state's future.[7]

Floridians' common sense instinct—that overcrowded classrooms make it harder to teach and learn—is backed by a mountain of academic research. Research not only documents that reduced class sizes improve student achievement, but also that smaller classes reduce discipline problems, help retain teachers, and reduce dropout rates.

State leaders have unfortunately set different priorities, passing corporate tax breaks requested by the governor and this year eliminating an annual tax holiday on back-to-school purchases.[8] "There's just a refusal to listen," said Scott Rose, Florida's 1988 Superintendent of the Year and a longtime Republican.[9] One columnist wrote, "If we keep leaving it to the Legislature, we will have 50 kids in a classroom 10 years from now."[10] In fact, in some schools, that day is here now.[11]

This November, Floridians will also have an opportunity to vote on two other initiatives to strengthen education in the state. **Amendment 8** (www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/4prek), sponsored by Miami Mayor Alex Penelas, would offer voluntary, universal and high-quality pre-kindergarten learning programs for all four-year-old children. **Amendment 11**, (www.edexflorida.org) sponsored by former governor and current U.S. Senator Bob Graham, would strengthen management and accountability of the state university system.

Together with Amendment 9, these amendments recognize the importance of lifelong learning, and they address crucial concerns from pre-K through higher education. They make sure all children have access to an early start (Amendment 8), have a learning environment that strengthens their ability to achieve (Amendment 9), and ensures that they can continue their education in a university system that receives proper oversight (Amendment 11).

The Coalition to Reduce Class Size

The Coalition to Reduce Class Size (www.smallerclasses.org) was created and the campaign to amend the state constitution was launched to give Florida voters a chance to make education the priority that elected officials have not. A few years ago, disheartened to find that his daughter was in a kindergarten class with 34 students, State Senator Kendrick Meek began looking for answers. Unfortunately, the Legislature repeatedly defeated efforts to enact class-size reductions. Reflecting on the many times in which class-size reduction efforts have been blocked by the political establishment in Tallahassee, Meek recognized that real reform would require action by the people of Florida.

The Coalition has received an outpouring of support from students, parents, teachers, civic and business leaders, and other concerned Floridians. Defying all expectations, the Coalition's amendment was certified for the ballot with more than 580,000 verified signatures, almost 100,000 more than required.[12] The measure draws strong support from across political party lines. One supportive Republican is Kathy Bell, a media specialist at Tarpon Springs High School. "Our class sizes are ranging from 37 to 38," said Bell. "You can't teach 38 students. You can barely even put 38 in the classroom."[13]

Parent-Teacher Associations from dozens of Florida schools helped gather signatures. Among the supporters of the Coalition to Reduce Class Size are People For the American Way, the Florida Education Association, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the NAACP, the AFL-CIO, Service Employees International Union, the Florida Conference of Black State Legislators and many other local, state, and national organizations.

People For the American Way

People For the American Way (PFAW), a civil rights and civil liberties organization with 600,000 members and supporters nationwide, is actively involved in supporting the passage of Amendment 9, and also endorses Amendments 8 and 11.

Florida's citizens are clamoring for action to strengthen public education. PFAW's 35,000 Florida members and supporters are eager to help seize this opportunity. For many years, both in the Sunshine State and across the nation, PFAW has been a forceful advocate for reforming and improving public schools. Indeed, we have made quality education a top substantive priority.

PFAW and its affiliated Foundation have worked on many fronts to advance the goal of a quality education for every child. For example, we have urged reforms that support qualified teachers and honor those who have made education their profession. We have advocated on behalf of federal and state policies that will support school districts in recruiting, hiring, and training high-quality teachers and in giving teachers class sizes that allow them not only to manage but teach and inspire their students.

There is no question that class size reduction must be accompanied by improved teacher quality.

We recognize that strengthening the ties between schools, teachers and parents is crucial to the success of students and schools. That's why PFAW Foundation is working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Kodak, the Ad Council, and a wide range of allied organizations on a national campaign that educates, encourages and energizes parents in communities of color to be effectively involved in their children's education. Television, radio, print, and outdoor advertisements in English and Spanish have received over $14 million in placements in the first quarter of this year. Thousands of parents have received valuable tips and information from the SchoolSuccessInfo.org Web site. And this fall, thousands of parents will receive parental involvement "tool kits" at back-to-school rallies organized by NAACP chapters and other partnering organizations.

These are the kinds of programs that can help build crucial community support for schools. But teachers and parents cannot build stronger schools if public policy is simultaneously undermining that goal.

People For the American Way is proud to be a partner with Florida's Coalition to Reduce Class Size in the campaign to win passage of Amendment 9.

I. THE STRONG CASE FOR AMENDMENT 9

Florida's Elected Leaders Are Failing Our Children

The most recent installment of the *New Cornerstone* report by the Florida Chamber of Commerce issued an alarming verdict:

> "Florida ranks near the bottom tier of states in most measures of educational performance ...."[14]

In fact, there is overwhelming evidence of the significant ground that our state has lost. Florida's high school graduation rate ranks 49th in the country.[15] SAT scores have fallen to rank only 46th out of 50, and our state's ACT scores are the lowest in eight years.[16]

Florida's elected leaders are allowing its schoolchildren to fall further behind other American students. **Our state ranks a dismal 50th in per-capita spending on education and its rankings on educational achievement reflect that deficit.**[17]

Florida spends an average of $5,982 per K-12 student, a figure well below the national average of $7,079.[18] If Florida invested in its public schools at the national average, students would reap the benefits of an additional $2.6 billion in education funding every year.[19]

A major reason why our state ranks so poorly on so many of these key measures of educational quality is because of yet another ranking—Florida ranks 44th out of 50 states in student-teacher ratios.[20] Indeed, overcrowded classrooms are taking a devastating toll on the quality of teaching and learning.

Tragically, there is ample evidence that many students heading back to school this fall are entering classrooms that are even *more* crowded. A *Miami Herald* article examined classroom conditions in several southwest Florida counties and reported that for the 2002-03 school year "students are bracing for larger class sizes and crowded classrooms."[21] The *Herald* also reported that teachers in one city high school complained that some classes had 50 or 60 students.[22] In Lake County, public school officials predict their student population will double within a decade.[23]

Former U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley has expressed a view that has been overwhelmingly supported by years and years of research: "Teachers do not teach most effectively when they are hampered by the burden of too many students in the classroom."[24] Considering the overcrowded classrooms that plague so many of our public schools, the deplorable state of education in Florida is no surprise.

Overcrowded classes sabotage the best efforts of teachers to help their students learn. "Add 10 extra children to your family and see what happens," a Leon County educator wrote in a letter to her local newspaper. "We all pay for overcrowding."[25] Last school year, Eugene Tisdale, a Brevard County 11th-grader described his predicament: "I'm in a class with 35 other kids and I'm telling you, it's difficult."[26]

A written survey of more than 11,000 middle and high school students in Palm Beach County found that students placed a high priority on smaller classes. About 63 percent said it is easiest for them to learn in classes with fewer than 26 students.[27]

More and more parents, civic leaders, business owners and others are recognizing that shortchanging children today puts Florida's tomorrow in jeopardy. Without taking action now, conditions in our schools will deteriorate even further. High school dropout rates—already alarming—will soar. Businesses will find it increasingly difficult to create jobs or fill existing jobs with young workers who have the necessary skills. Cities and communities will become less cohesive and stable, and their young people will be more tempted to turn to drugs or engage in other criminal activities.

If the state remains on educational "auto-pilot," classrooms will only become more overcrowded. Our public schools need urgent attention, and Amendment 9—the class-size reduction initiative—can be both the starting point and the catalyst for broader, systemic reforms that put Florida's children and future first.

Smaller Classes Mean Better Schools, Smarter Students

It is common sense that overcrowded classes make it harder to teach and harder to learn. The research community overwhelmingly agrees. Of course strengthening schools requires a multi-pronged approach. We must invest in recruiting, training, supporting, and rewarding good teachers. But those teachers must have classes that are manageable. Smaller classes are not the only answer, but they are an indispensable part of the solution to the crisis facing Florida's public schools.

According to the May 16th edition of the Orlando Sentinel, Hamilton Elementary in Sanford, Florida "boosted its fourth-grade reading scores for the third year in a row, beating the state average this year by a point. In 1998, the first year FCAT was given, its reading scores lagged behind the state average by nearly 40 points. Like some of Seminole's other struggling schools, Hamilton used a new, very structured program and small classes to help its mostly low-income students become better readers."[28]

Smaller Classes Lead to Improved Academic Achievement

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education reported, "Studies have consistently identified a positive relationship between reduced class size and improved student performance."[29]

In fact, a host of research and policy organizations have examined academic data and concluded that class-size reduction improves student learning. These include the Economic Policy Institute, RAND, Educational Testing Service, National Black Caucus of State Legislators, North Carolina Education Research Council, and many others.[30] Leading researchers have examined test scores from the National Assessment on Educational Progress and found a direct link between smaller class sizes and higher student achievement.[31] The American Institute of Research analyzed the performance of a national sample of schools and

concluded that "reducing class size is significantly related to higher academic performance, particularly in reading."[32]

Tennessee's Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) program offers compelling evidence that smaller classes improve learning. Few studies have been as comprehensive in scope as the STAR study, which renowned Harvard statistician Frederick Mosteller called "one of the most important educational investigations ever carried out."[33] STAR researchers evaluated the progress of more than 11,000 students who were in small K-3 classes in 1985-89.[34] The academic progress of these students was compared with the progress of students who had attended larger classes during all of these years.

STAR researchers found a dramatic difference in the two groups' performance. Not only did those who were in smaller K-3 classes outperform their peers in larger classes during those years, but they continued in subsequent years to outpace them in math, reading and science through eighth grade. In addition, the gap between the small-class and larger-class test scores increased over time.[35] In high school, those who had been in small K-3 classes were *less* likely to be retained at the same grade level and were *more* likely to graduate and earn higher grade-point averages.[36] STAR project small-class students were also more likely to take college entrance exams than their regular-class peers.[37] After reviewing Tennessee's STAR study, Jeremy Finn, a professor at the State University of New York, declared that the study "leaves no doubt that small classes have an advantage over larger classes" in raising student achievement.[38]

In 1996, Wisconsin began Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE), a class-size reduction program that targets low-income students in grades K-3. The program reduces pupil-teacher ratios to 15-1 in the early elementary grades.[39] Studies have confirmed that SAGE is helping to improve learning and narrow the achievement gap between white and minority students. In an evaluation of SAGE and comparison schools with larger class sizes, 29 of the top 30 classrooms in terms of student achievement in language arts, reading and math were SAGE classrooms. The achievement gap in language arts and math between African American and white first grade students was *reduced* in SAGE classrooms while it *increased* in comparison schools.[40]

In 1996, California enacted class-size reductions in its public schools. California's approach has raised some legitimate concerns because it was implemented too quickly and was only partially funded by the state, shortcomings that have been addressed by the authors of Florida's Amendment 9. However, in spite of these concerns about California's approach to class size reduction, the evidence reveals that student learning improved. In five of the six largest California districts, researchers found that schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students saw their test scores jump by 10 percent in reading and 15 percent in math.[41] In a study of Los Angeles students, Vital Search reported that test scores rose, particularly in math and language arts. "The policy implications of our data are clear," said Vital Search analyst Harold N. Urman. "Class-size reduction helps, and it helps low-income students the most."[42]

In the 1980s, Indiana initiated the Prime Time class-size reduction program, which was confirmed to improve student achievement.[43] The direct link between smaller classes and academic improvement has also been found in North Carolina and Texas.[44] In Texas, one researcher reviewed data from more than 800 school districts and found that as pupil-teacher

ratios increased, student achievement fell.[45] Experts also have identified the importance of smaller classes in helping teachers work more effectively with special education students.[46]

While most studies on class size have focused on the early elementary grades, research has also documented the positive impact of smaller classes in the higher grades. For example, Harold Wenglinsky of the Educational Testing Service found that smaller classes at the eighth-grade level improved the learning environment, which led, in turn, to higher student achievement.[47]

The *Washington Post* recently reported on local school officials' efforts to battle dropout rates by focusing on reducing class sizes in ninth grade through special academies. The newspaper reported, "In Seattle, officials found that ninth-grade academies led to improved attendance, fewer discipline problems and higher academic performance."[48]

Furthermore, for their 1997 "Quality Counts" report, an *Education Week* panel recommended that "states should make every effort to reduce the number of students that a [secondary] teacher teaches each day to fewer than 80."[49] At the time of this report, only 44 percent of Florida's secondary English teachers were facing fewer than 80 students per day.[50]

Some positive effects of reduced class sizes are difficult to measure precisely. For example, Tennessee State University education professor Barbara Nye has found that smaller classes maximize teachers' efforts to communicate with parents.[51] And parental involvement has long been identified as a critical factor in how well students perform in school.[52]

Incredibly, Education Secretary Jim Horne released an analysis—one columnist called it "laughable"—that purports to show a correlation between *larger* class sizes and academic success.[53] Unfortunately, some members of the Board of Education have continued to ignore the evidence on class size, disparaging the class size amendment and its supporters at a recent public hearing.[54]

The impact of smaller class sizes has been widely recognized by operators of private and charter schools, who frequently make class size a major selling point. One example is Nobel Learning Communities, the nation's largest operator of private, non-sectarian schools.[55] When an interviewer recently asked Nobel's chief executive officer, Jack Clegg, about the company's approach, smaller class size was one of a few specific educational strategies that Clegg identified regarding its schools, which cover kindergarten through eighth grade. "We believe in small classes and small schools, so the children are safe, every teacher knows every child, and every principal knows every child in school and all the parents," he explained, adding that Nobel tries to keep class sizes within a range of 15 to 17 students.[56]

In fact, in a 1997 article about a charter school he was involved in founding, Jeb Bush told a reporter, "I believe smaller schools, smaller classrooms, are better, and I think the school shows that."[57] In Miami, the Governor's children attended the Gulliver Schools, a prestigious private academy with several campuses covering primary through secondary grades. Among the strengths that Gulliver identifies on its Web site is the school's "low student-to-teacher ratio ..."[58]

Smaller Classes Improve Teacher Recruitment and Retention

One of the most impressive and encouraging effects of reducing class sizes is the way it facilitates quality teaching. This is a crucial consideration for the state of Florida, which will need thousands of new teachers in the coming decade regardless of Amendment 9,[59] and which could lose the invaluable experience of thousands of veteran teachers if the frustrations of dealing with overcrowded classes continue to drive them out of the system.

Some officials tend to approach the school reform debate from a "which-one-is-the-best reform" approach, suggesting for example that education policy should focus on either teacher training or class size. This is a false either-or approach; strengthening public schools requires a comprehensive approach. Providing classes that are small enough to allow for effective teaching can have a powerful effect on strengthening recruitment and retention of teachers. Princeton University's Alan Krueger recently explained: "Developing strategies to recruit and reward outstanding teachers is a complement to smaller classes, *not a substitute for them."* (emphasis added)[60]

Indeed, Amendment 9 will enhance the ability of school districts to attract men and women to the teaching profession—and keep them there. This is confirmed by the U.S. Department of Education's finding that smaller classes create working conditions that raise teachers' job satisfaction.[61] The Educational Priorities Panel studied a class-size reduction program in New York City and found that the program, among other benefits, improved teacher morale.[62]

Perhaps most significantly, there is direct Florida-specific evidence that reducing class sizes would induce former teachers to return to the classroom. A state survey asked respondents to choose five out of 18 factors that would encourage them to return to teaching. Of the 18 factors, "smaller class size" came in second only to higher pay. Smaller classes actually beat higher pay among former math teachers. Smaller classes and higher pay were the only factors cited by at least 60 percent of those surveyed.[63]

A teacher who called in on August 14, 2002, to "Florida On the Line" on Florida Public Radio said, "I am a teacher, have been a teacher for ten years of junior high, and I ... would love to have an increase in salary... but I would gladly give it up for smaller class size. My job fulfillment on the classes that I have had in the past years that have been in the size range of 25-26 students is just phenomenally different from a class size of 30-35 students. The amount of learning that can take place in a smaller class is just exponential with just the difference in ten students, and I just, I really, since I've started teaching, really felt that class size, just lowering class size, is the number one thing that we can do to improve education."[64]

Without question, by reducing class sizes, Florida would send a powerful message about the kind of teacher-friendly, learning-centered environment that it wants to ensure in every public school classroom.

Even without Amendment 9, Florida will have to hire an estimated 160,000 teachers in the next ten years just to handle projected growth and keep class sizes where they are. It is estimated that Amendment 9 would require an additional 32,000 teachers, or about 20 percent more.[65] In other words, unless officials are going to let classes continue to grow, the state must now make it

a priority to invest more money in classrooms and teachers. Inaction is not an option. The added investment called for by Amendment 9 would pay enormous dividends for students and the state.

Smaller Classes Are Better Behaved Classes

It is common sense to expect that smaller classes are easier for teachers to manage. As Kevin Lavelle, a student at Sarasota High School, told a reporter, "Bigger classes can be hectic and noisy. Some teachers have complete control, but others don't do as good a job. It's not their fault. They shouldn't have to deal with 40 kids at a time."[66]

In fact, studies from several states have found that teachers in smaller classes experienced fewer disciplinary problems than those in larger classes.[67] The reason is no surprise. Research in California revealed that smaller classes enabled teachers to provide more individual attention to students and resolve disciplinary issues early—before they escalated.[68] An Indiana analysis showed that smaller classes cut down on disruptions and enhanced teacher productivity.[69]

Several years ago, Murray State University officials worked with a number of public schools in Kentucky to implement strategies designed to combat student bullying. After participating in the program, teacher Lynn Hambrick identified the strategy that worked the best. "You can do nothing better for a teacher than to lower her class size."[70]

This July, a nationwide study found that nearly one-third of all young people had been bullied at least once in the previous month. To combat the problem, the study's authors made a number of recommendations, including urging teachers "to find ways to get to know each of the young people in your classroom as individuals."[71] Needless to say, overcrowded classrooms make this recommendation nearly impossible.

Smaller Classes Reduce the Drop-out Rate

Smaller classes also can strengthen future opportunities for secondary school students by helping to lower the dropout rate. Students in the STAR study not only achieved at higher levels, but they were less likely to drop out of high school than their peers.[72] Another study by Yale University researcher Michael Boozer found a strong link between lower pupil-teacher ratios and lower student dropout rates.[73] Just last year, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory advised school district officials to "[r]ecognize the potential of class size reduction for reducing the dropout rate and include consideration of lowering class size when formulating dropout prevention plans."[74]

Florida Can Afford to Reduce Class Sizes

Reducing class sizes in Florida public schools will require a substantial but affordable investment in new classroom space and new teachers. Importantly, according to the terms of Amendment 9, the state Legislature, not local school districts, would be required to fund the needed investments. *(See Appendix B for full text of Florida's Amendment to Reduce Class Size).* Scare tactics about burdens on local school districts or property taxes have no basis in fact. Amendment 9 would make smaller classes a statewide priority and responsibility.

Smaller Classes Are Cost-Effective Investments

When considering any proposal, elected officials and the public must weigh both the cost *and* the return. Alan Krueger of Princeton University has examined the positive, long-term effect that smaller classes have on earnings. Krueger wrote recently that each dollar invested in class-size reduction produced $2 in benefits.[75] Additionally, the RAND Institute studied the various strategies that states had used to help improve student performance and identified reducing student-teacher ratios in the lower grades as one of the three "most cost-effective" reforms.[76]

One of the reasons smaller classes provide such a sound return on the dollars invested is because they help cut other, unnecessary costs. As the U.S. Department of Education has pointed out, the cost of class-size reduction "can be offset by the resulting decrease in within-grade retentions, reduced high school dropout rates, a diminished need for remedial instruction and long-term special education services, and increased teacher satisfaction and retention."[77]

When the Florida Senate voted in April to support a class-size reduction amendment, the Senate put itself on record behind the view that "investments in smaller class sizes lead to high student achievement and higher lifetime income and earning power."[78]

Making needed investments in infrastructure would also provide jobs and a boost to the state's economy.

Legislature Has Many Options for Funding Smaller Classes

Amendment 9 does not dictate a particular funding mechanism. Amendment 9 will instruct the Legislature to make education a priority and require legislators to determine responsible ways for funding smaller classes. While neither the Coalition to Reduce Class Size nor People For the American Way has endorsed a particular funding mechanism, there are a number of approaches that legislators could consider, in addition to seeking ways to eliminate waste and inefficiencies.

- Reviewing Special Interest Sales Tax Exemptions

One option that the Legislature could explore: identifying special interest sales tax exemptions that do not provide a demonstrated benefit to the state and redirecting some funds from special interests to the public interest and class size reduction . Next year, Florida will raise about $17 billion in sales tax revenue. Yet, the state will lose about $23 billion in sales tax revenue due to existing exemptions.[79] Redirecting even a small portion of that $23 billion could pay for smaller classes. Legislators could close special interest loopholes (such as exemptions for adult entertainment and escort services, skyboxes at sporting events, and ostrich feed) while maintaining exemptions that have a broad impact on individual Floridians, such as grocery purchases, veterans' programs, prescription drugs, and other basic needs.

Senate President John McKay is spearheading an effort to try to close many sales tax exemptions. "It's wrong for special interests to get tax breaks when your constituents and my

constituents pay 6 percent on a household item like a washing machine," McKay said.[80] McKay's efforts have drawn bipartisan support, including that of Rhea Chiles, the state's Republican comptroller Bob Milligan and former Majority Leader Jack Latvala, a Republican.[81]

- Reconsideration of Corporate Tax Breaks

Another possible option for the Legislature to consider as a funding source would be repealing some or all of the corporate tax breaks that were enacted earlier this year. Over the next three fiscal years, these corporate tax breaks will cost the state nearly $430 million in revenue.[82]

In addition to freeing up hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to reduce class sizes, repealing these corporate tax breaks might actually boost the economy. In a written opinion earlier this year, the chief economist for the state's Office of Economic and Demographic Research wrote that Florida would lose both jobs and revenue as a result of the corporate tax breaks.[83]

- Prioritizing Lottery Proceeds

As it explores funding options for Amendment 9, the Legislature should more closely examine how state lottery funds are being allocated and determine the lottery's impact on other state funding for education. The lottery, created in 1986, was promoted to voters with the understanding that lottery revenues would be *additional* funding for public schools. In fact, the official title of the law creating the Florida lottery is the "Florida Public Education Lottery Act."[84] Several prominent groups and elected officials have raised legitimate concerns that lottery receipts have not gone to *enhance* spending but have simply replaced money that would normally have been allocated from general revenues. Legislators have a responsibility to use the lottery monies in the way they were originally intended.

- The Impact of Long-term Financing

Building new classrooms will be required to meet Amendment 9's class size targets, but not all of the funds needed for construction will have to come out of the state's budget over the next eight years. Infrastructure projects, such as primary and secondary schools, highways, public transportation, and convention facilities, are regularly financed using pay-as-you-use plans of finance with bonds amortizing over 20-30 years. It is misleading to treat construction costs as if they would be paid in the short term, essentially on a pay-as-you-go basis, in the form of cash as a part of the annual budget. In fact, doing so could be considered financial malfeasance.

An investment bank that regularly participates in the state's bond issues estimates that the borrowing rate for AAA insured bonds would currently be around 5.15 percent. A rough estimate is that $1 billion financed over 20 years would require about $64 million in annual debt service; if financed over 30 years, the annual service on $1 billion would be about $76 million.

Long-term financing of capital expenditures in fixed assets is routine because it has many advantages. It leverages available money to meet immediate needs; minimizes the effect on the

annual budget by distributing construction costs over a period that matches the life of the facilities; and can avoid future increases in construction costs by allowing projects to be funded and built now.

In fact, with interest rates at historic lows, *now* is the ideal time to finance the kind of construction projects that would make smaller classes a reality. Given the capital needs our schools face, it is baffling that the state has not taken advantage of the lowest interest rates in years to begin to address the classroom needs of our children.

The High Cost of Failing to Act

In addition to the devastating consequences of overcrowded classrooms on the learning environment, student achievement and teacher retention and morale, there are real economic and other consequences if we fail to bring class sizes down to manageable levels.

"The people of Florida are aware that there is a price tag associated with reducing class size," said U.S. Senator Bob Graham, who supports the class-size initiative. "You talk about cost? What's the cost to the state of a system that says less than half of ninth-graders are going to graduate in four years?"[85] As Princeton's Krueger recently explained, "Class size probably influences other outcomes with economic consequences, such as crime and welfare dependence ...so the economic benefits (of smaller classes) could be understated."[86]

Consider the context. The state of Florida spends hundreds of millions of dollars on its juvenile justice system.[87] In 1999-2000, judges committed 11,247 juvenile offenders in Florida to residential confinement.[88] The state's Department of Juvenile Justice reports, "Juvenile offenders in Florida whose crimes are serious enough to merit placement in residential programs typically come from single-parent households and are truants, dropouts, or are doing poorly in school.[89]

Issues such as crime are obviously complex problems involving many factors, but education is clearly a powerful influence and small class size is one critical component.

II. THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST AMENDMENT 9: PLAYING POLITICS WITH OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

Smaller classes have a well-documented impact on children's education. Parents and community leaders concerned about increasingly overcrowded classrooms are eager for a solution. It is disappointing that Gov. Jeb Bush and his administration have decided to oppose this common-sense initiative and are mounting a dishonest campaign based on distortion and fear tactics.

As a candidate in 1997, Jeb Bush called "school overcrowding" one of the "critical issues that will shape the kind of future we provide our kids."[90] However, five years later, the governor and his allies have declared war on Amendment 9.

Earlier this year, the Bush administration fought unsuccessfully to have recommendations that the state seek to reduce class sizes stripped from a major Chamber of Commerce report on the importance of investing in Florida's educational future.[91]

A *Miami Herald* writer recently predicted that Amendment 9 will face a "final flurry of scare tactics: convince seniors that the amendment will cost so much they will lose prescription drug benefits; suggest to suburban moms that their kids will be bused across the county to meet class-size quotas; and tell Tampa Bay and South Florida commuters that road money will dry up."[92] In fact, these scare tactics are already being used by Jeb Bush and some of his political allies. The governor told parents that Amendment 9 would require their children to be bused for great distances,[93] a threat repeated recently by Education Secretary Horne.

Political Process, Tainted Numbers

Almost immediately after the state Supreme Court unanimously approved the ballot language for the class-size initiative, Gov. Bush hastily amended his call for a special legislative session to include a new proposal—requiring all citizen-initiated constitutional amendments to be accompanied on the ballot by a cost estimate explained in up to 50 words.[94] (Amendments offered by the Legislature were exempted from this requirement.) The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC), a panel that provides economic forecasting and analysis to state government, was assigned the job of calculating the cost estimate and coming up with the explanatory language that would appear on the election ballot alongside each amendment. The REC is composed of representatives from the governor's office, the Senate, and the House, along with an economist from the Legislature's independent Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR).[95]

At the REC hearing in June, the representatives from the governor's office, Senate and House came up with a $20-$27.5 billion price tag[96] for the initiative using a cumulative cost formula that they do not normally use to calculate the cost of other programs—including tax cuts, school vouchers or other legislation that has a major long-term impact on the availability of funding for public schools. This method was not applied to any other initiative. It seems to have been devised to put the largest possible price tag on the class size initiative. (The legal status of the requirement to have the price tag on the initiative has not been resolved in the courts; a judge ruled against the requirement and the state has appealed.)[97]

A *St. Petersburg Times* article noted that the price tag "relies on budget assumptions rarely if ever used in state government." The article noted "If standard budget practices had been followed, the estimate calculated by state budget analysts would be cut by more than half."[98]

The class size price tag does not express future costs in 2002 numbers, which would help voters put the figure in the context of the current budget. This is how the REC analyzes the cost of legislation and its impact on the state's budget. Yet in the case of the class size initiative, instead of expressing figures in current numbers, they adjusted every year for inflation and then added all the years together. At the REC hearing, Edward Montanaro, the widely respected economist who then headed the independent EDR, said the approach being used created a "meaningless stew" and that it "fundamentally misrepresents the situation" to voters.[99]

"When opponents want to kill a project, they maximize the cost," Iowa State University Professor Kurt Thurmaier told the *St. Petersburg Times*. "This sounds like a way to maximize the cost."[100]

Consider this analogy. People who are trying to buy houses in the same neighborhood compare the advertised selling prices. But imagine that one homeowner would be singled out and required to advertise his house at a cost that included all the future payments a buyer would make on a 30-year mortgage. That one house would appear vastly more expensive than the others. It would be unfair both to the seller and to people trying to accurately compare house prices.

Some opponents of the initiative have confused the situation even further by comparing the inflated 8-year cost of the initiative to the current, *one-year* budget for education in the state.

Indeed, the REC's method led to an estimate that is much higher than other estimates of class-size reduction. Last October, long after organizers of the class-size initiative announced their plans, state Education Secretary Jim Horne had cited an estimate of $10 billion.[101] This April, the head of the Florida School Boards Association estimated the cost at $5-6 billion.[102]

Montanaro had released his range of cost estimates for the class size initiative well before the REC's June 27 meeting, as the *Tallahassee Democrat* explained, "to get feedback from supporters and opponents."[103] The initiative, which would be phased in over eight years, was projected by Montanaro to cost between $4 and $12 billion over that eight-year period.[104] Other members of the REC did not invite advance scrutiny.

Under the REC's normal operating procedures, all four REC principals must arrive at a consensus in order to have an "official revenue forecast." If they cannot reach consensus, there is no official forecast.[105] The law that gave the REC the responsibility for estimating the price tag for initiatives, however, changed the normal consensus rules and allowed the estimate to become official with three out of four votes. Montanaro, who voted against the $20 to $27.5 billion estimate, has impeccable credentials. One Florida newspaper recently described Montanaro, who directed EDR for 16 years, as "the Legislature's recognized financial expert."[106] After Montanaro announced in late July that he would be leaving EDR, House Speaker Tom Feeney, R-Oviedo, described him as having "a reputation of being a distinguished and principled state employee who is very conscientious and does his job without being bullied."[107] And Florida Senate President John McKay, R-Bradenton, said that Montanaro "performed a good service for the Legislature and the state."[108]

A False Argument on Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Since Amendment 9 will require the hiring of thousands of additional teachers across the state, some have suggested that the amendment might add to the difficulties of recruiting and retaining teachers. The opposite is true. As discussed on pages 9-10, class-size reduction enhances the ability of school districts to attract and retain quality teachers. While teacher pay is certainly an important factor in recruiting and retaining teachers, state Sen. Don Sullivan, R-St. Petersburg, noted earlier this year that the stresses of managing classrooms and keeping order are among the reasons why teachers leave the profession.[109] The U.S. Department of Education has

identified the link between smaller classes and improved teacher morale and satisfaction.[110] This is backed up by Florida's own data showing that smaller classes would strongly encourage former teachers to return to the classroom.[111] This reminds us why it's so important to take "crowd control" out of teachers' job descriptions.

Attracting and retaining a quality teaching force is always important, and Florida must regularly evaluate and strengthen its efforts in this area. But to frame the debate as an 'either-or'—smaller classes versus teacher retention—is a false and cynical choice. Our state cannot afford to choose one and ignore the other. Indeed, creating smaller classes is a logical and essential first step toward broader reform. Education researcher Alex Molnar has called class-size reductions "the necessary precondition" to education reform. "Then you follow up with staff development," Molnar added.[112]

The California Experience

Some Amendment 9 critics have pointed to difficulties in implementing California's 1996 class-size reduction law. But despite some bumps along the road, the California law has received emphatic praise from parents and educators. "This is the most positive thing that has happened," said a public school principal in San Diego. "I can't think of anything else like it."[113] There are several noteworthy differences between California's law and our proposed Amendment 9—differences that will help ensure that Florida's experience is even more positive than California's.

CLASS SIZE: A TALE OF TWO STATES

	California's 1996 law	**Florida's Amendment 9**
Does the state fully fund the class-size reductions?	**No.** Local districts must assume some costs.	**Yes.** The state would be required to provide adequate funds to reduce class sizes.
Does the provision allow ample time for hiring additional teachers and creating additional classroom space?	**No.** The state's law didn't provide districts with a multi-year period to prepare for the new limits.	**Yes.** The amendment's provisions would be phased in over an eight-year period.

First, the California program did not require all districts to participate, meaning children in some school districts may not reap the benefits.[114] Florida's Amendment 9 sets class-size limits for all school districts without loopholes. Second, the California program has been funded only partially by the state, leaving some low-income districts unable to cover the difference.[115] By contrast, the class-size reductions in Florida's Amendment 9 must be funded *entirely* by the state. Third, California's class-size limits were implemented immediately, without a phase-in period.

Florida's Amendment 9 phases in the reductions over eight years, providing ample time for school districts to construct new facilities and recruit additional teachers.

These differences reflect the ways in which the framers of Amendment 9 have learned and benefited from California's experience. Whatever shortcomings California has experienced, the bottom line is this: data show that the state's class-size program has raised student achievement *and* increased parental satisfaction with their children's public schools.[116]

Florida education officials reportedly reviewed the state's experience with class-size reduction as part of preparing a report on Amendment 9. Given the hostility that state education officials have displayed toward Amendment 9, *Orlando Sentinel* columnist Mike Thomas wrote, "If [the report] comes out in support of smaller classes, I will eat this page."[117] When the Board of Education released its report, Thomas wrote, "Keep the ketchup because I'm safe." Thomas called the report a "hackneyed political position paper." [118]

III. WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION

Some have suggested that class-size limits do not belong in the Florida Constitution but should be addressed through the legislative process. But the Legislature has repeatedly failed to fulfill quality education mandates that already appear in the constitution. The specific language of Amendment 9 is required to ensure that the voters' will becomes state policy.

Amendment 9 serves as a vehicle to help fulfill the mandate of voters who, in 1998, called quality education "a fundamental value" and approved constitutional language asserting that the state has "a paramount duty ... to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders."[119] As long as Florida's classrooms remain overcrowded, that language in the constitution is nothing more than a broken promise.

Jane Kuckel, chair of the Lee County School Board, summed it up this way: "I don't think we would have come to this point if over the last few years it had been a priority in our Legislature," Kuckel said. "[The initiative] is an outcry from parents that you can't do this anymore."[120]

Failed Leadership

"Destiny is no matter of chance," said William Jennings Bryan. "It is a matter of choice."[121] Indeed, through their misplaced priorities, our state's leaders have made a choice: to condemn our children to classroom conditions that are hostile to teaching and learning. In doing so, they seriously jeopardize Florida's future.

The crisis faced by our overcrowded schools is not new, and the warning signs have been all too glaring. For example, in the fall of 1996, Broward County schools enrolled 35,000 more students than it had seats to accommodate.[122] Other school districts throughout the state have also seen their student populations swell—without the needed state funds to construct new classroom space and hire additional teachers.

Some who have criticized Amendment 9 have offered a mixed message: smaller classes are a good idea, but this initiative costs too much. In other words, to quote Frederick Douglass, these critics "want the crops without plowing up the ground."[123] Indeed, the major power brokers in Florida have been unwilling to lead on this issue and have offered no solution for overcrowding. Floridians are tired of excuses. They want answers.

The Legislature

For too many years, the Legislature has been derelict in its duty to the children in our public schools. During the mid-1990s, a special allocation of state funding was earmarked for class-size reduction, but the Legislature later incorporated these funds into the overall funding that school districts received.[124] This lack of legislative discipline sabotaged the goal of smaller classes.

Years later, there was another false start. In 1998, the Florida Senate's Majority Office compiled a comprehensive report on class size and ultimately recommended a class size reduction initiative.[125] Despite the efforts of some legislators, the issue of class-size reduction got nowhere in the next legislative session.

Last year, the Legislature had yet another opportunity to address the problem of overcrowded classrooms, but genuine efforts to limit class sizes failed. A bill purporting to address the class size issue was introduced last year, offering a $3,000 voucher to any student in an overcrowded public school. Instead of fulfilling their obligations as stewards of the public schools, the backers of this bill were content to ship public school students—and, with them, millions of tax dollars—to private schools. Jody Gleason, a Palm Beach County School Board member, asked the obvious question: "Why don't they just give us money to build more schools?"[126]

Earlier this year, hopes were raised—and later dashed—again by the Legislature. In April, the Senate passed an amendment to the state education code, establishing a commission that would implement smaller class sizes for all public school grades and recommend funding sources for these class-size reductions.[127] The Senate amendment received bipartisan support but was defeated in the House.

The Governor's Office

In a fundraising letter before the 1998 election, Jeb Bush decried overcrowded schools and classrooms in Volusia and Broward counties, and he offered "a few ideas" to voters. Bush's very first idea was "to restore intimacy to our schools. I am convinced that *smaller is always better than bigger* when it comes to teaching kids." (Emphasis in original.)[128] But he failed to include class size in his education plan. And four years later, his actions are a far cry from that campaign rhetoric. While the class-size problem predated Gov. Bush's arrival at the governor's mansion, he has repeatedly shown that this issue is not one of his priorities. Instead, Bush's approach to education has gone in a very different and disturbing direction.

While class-size reduction has remained on the back-burner, Gov. Bush has actively led the charge for voucher programs that divert critical funding and energy from our public schools.

Gov. Bush's tax policies have seriously drained the state treasury at the same time he suggests the state cannot afford to invest in smaller class sizes for students. The corporate tax breaks championed by Bush are a prime example. When Congress passed a stimulus package earlier this year, the National Governor's Association (NGA) warned of the impact that this lost revenue would have on states. "Education will clearly be the big loser as governors struggle to balance their budgets," said NGA Executive Director Ray Scheppach, who warned that the lost revenue could inflict "larger class sizes" and other consequences on states.[129] Armed with this information, Gov. Bush pushed for a bill that would—in the words of the state's chief economist—"allow Florida corporations to legally avoid $428.4 million" in corporate taxes.[130] The corporate tax breaks were approved by the Legislature in spite of warnings from the Office of Economic and Demographic Research that the bill would deplete revenues and cost the state jobs.[131]

Over the last three years, Florida's ranking has fallen in per-capita education spending, graduation rates, and SAT scores, while class sizes have increased.[132] That record and the governor's actions may explain the results of a June poll conducted by the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* and the *Orlando Sentinel* which found that only 28 percent of those polled said public education had improved under Gov. Bush's leadership.[133]

The Solution For the Crisis We Face

Floridians have rallied behind Amendment 9 because they see it as a common-sense way to improve learning—a way to enable teachers to get to know their students better, structure lessons with this knowledge in mind, and devote extra time to those students who would otherwise fall behind. Jerome Showers, a father of five, supports Amendment 9 because he has seen first-hand how his 12-year-old son's grades improved in a smaller class.[134] A longtime Leon County teacher put it this way: "Will smaller classes solve all our problems? Of course not, but it will be a *giant* step forward." (Emphasis in original.)[135]

On Tuesday, November 5, voters will have the power to make children a real priority. We believe they will. Amendment 9 has excited and empowered ordinary citizens across our state. Amendment 9 has reminded Floridians that 'politics' affect their lives—and their children's lives—in a profound way. Amendment 9 has helped to remind the public that democracy doesn't run on auto-pilot.

Now is the time. Amendment 9 is the way.

APPENDIX A

Selected Resources on Class Size

Florida's Coalition to Reduce Class Size was established to help mobilize grassroots support in support of Florida's class-size initiative, which will appear on the ballot as Amendment 9. For more information about the Coalition, see their Web site at: www.smallerclasses.org.

People For the American Way (PFAW) is a national organization that advances the principles of quality education, free expression, civic participation, tolerance, and constitutional liberties. In addition to its Washington, D.C., headquarters, PFAW has offices in Tallahassee and Miami. PFAW Foundation has produced numerous reports on school reform and educational priorities, including several that were cited in a recent U.S. Supreme Court opinion. These reports address the issue of class-size reduction:

- *Two Roads to Reform: Comparing the Research on Vouchers and Class-Size Reduction* (May 2002) *http://www.pfaw.org/issues/education/reports/tworoads/*

- *Punishing Success: The Governor's Proposed Education Budget in Wisconsin and the SAGE and Voucher Programs* (April 2001) http://www.pfaw.org/issues/education/reports/PunishingSuccess.pdf

The **Tennessee STAR** study is a landmark study that reveals the powerful and lasting impact that smaller classes have on student achievement. These documents provide more information:

- Comprehensive information about the TN STAR study, including research findings, data, fact sheets and bibliographies of supplemental analyses are available at http://www.heros-inc.org/star.htm.

- Elizabeth Word et al, *Project STAR Final Executive Summary Report, Kindergarten Through Third Grade, 1985-1989*, Tennessee State University, Department of Education, June 1990, available at http://www.cde.ca.gov/classsize/eval/projstar.htm.

- Helen Pate-Bain, B. DeWayne Fulton, and Jayne Boyd-Zaharias, *Effects of Class-size Reduction in the Early Grades (K-3) on High School Performance: Preliminary Results (1999) from Project STAR, Tennessee's Longitudinal Class-size Study*, Lebanon, TN: Health and Education Research Operative Services (HEROS), Inc., April 1999, available at http://www.heros-inc.org/star-hs-p.pdf.

Last school year, more than 81,000 students attended smaller classes, thanks to **Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education** (SAGE) program. These documents include annual evaluations and other reports on SAGE's positive impact on student learning:

- Comprehensive information about the SAGE initiative, including annual evaluations, reports and related publications can be accessed at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/sage.html.

- Alex Molnar et al, "2000-2001 Evaluation Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program," Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2001, available at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum01.htm.

- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, "1999-2000 Evaluation Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program," Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2000, available at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum00.htm.

- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, "1998-99 Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program Evaluation," Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 1999, available at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsummaryyear3.html.

- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, "1997-98 Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program Evaluation," Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 1998, available at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum98.pdf.

- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, "First Year Results of The Student Achievement Guarantee in Education Program," Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 1997, available at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum97.pdf.

- Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, "The costs and benefits of smaller classes in Wisconsin: A further evaluation of the SAGE program," *Wisconsin Policy Research Institute Report,* vol. 13, no. 6, September 2000, available at http://www.wpri.org/Reports/Volume13/Vol13no6.pdf.

In 1998, Congress passed a law providing federal aid to assist public school districts across the country in reducing class sizes. A review by the **U.S. Department of Education** revealed the benefits that these reductions were having:

- Gillian Cohen, Christine Miller, Robert Stonehill, Claire Geddes, *The Class-Size Reduction Program: Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation, A First-Year Report*, U.S. Department of Education, September 2000, available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/class.pdf.

- "Class-Size Reduction: Myths and Realities," U.S. Department of Education, Sept. 3, 1999, available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/myths.html.

- Ivor Pritchard, *Reducing Class Size, What Do We Know*, National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment, U.S. Department of Education, March 1999, available at http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass/title.html.

- Jeremy D. Finn, *Class Size and Students at Risk: What is Known? What is Next*, National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, U.S. Department of Education, April 1998, available at http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ClassSize/.

Some **additional evaluations and analysis** examining the benefits of class size reduction on student achievement have been attached below:

- "Closing the Achievement Gap: Improving Educational Outcomes for African American Children," National Black Caucus of State Legislators, November 2001, available at http://www.nbcsl.com/news/pdf/cag.pdf.

- Charles L. Thompson and Elizabeth K. Cunningham, "First in America Special Report: The Lessons of Class Size Reduction," North Carolina Education Research Council, October 2001, available at http://www.firstinamerica.northcarolina.edu/reports/class_size.pdf.

- Alan B. Krueger and Diane M. Whitmore, *Would Smaller Classes Help Close the Black-White Achievement Gap?* Working Paper #451, Princeton University, Industrial Relations Section, March 2001, available at http://www.irs.princeton.edu/pubs/pdfs/451.pdf.

- David Grissmer, Ann Flanagan, Jennifer Kawata and Stephanie Williamson, *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us,* Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000, available at http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR924/.

APPENDIX B

Florida's Amendment to Reduce Class Size

Article IX, Section 1, Florida Constitution, is amended to read:

Section 1. Public Education –

The education of children is a fundamental value to the people of the State of Florida. It is, therefore, a paramount duty of the State to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education and for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of institutions of higher learning and other public education programs that the needs of the people may require. **To assure that children attending public schools obtain a high quality education, the legislature shall make adequate provision to ensure that, by the beginning of the 2010 school year, there are a sufficient number of classrooms so that:**

1. **The maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher, who is teaching in public school classrooms for prekindergarten through grade 3 does not exceed 18 students;**
2. **The maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher who is teaching in public school classrooms for grades 4 through 8 does not exceed 22 students; and**
3. **The maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher who is teaching in public school classrooms for grades 9 through 12 does not exceed 25 students.**

The class size requirements of this subsection do not apply to extracurricular classes. Payment of the costs associated with reducing class size to meet these requirements is the responsibility of the state and not of local school districts. Beginning with the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the legislature shall provide sufficient funds to reduce the average number of students in each classroom by at least two students per year, until the maximum number of students per classroom do not exceed the requirements of this subsection.

Ballot Summary

Proposes an amendment to the State Constitution to require that the Legislature provide funding for sufficient classrooms, so that there be a maximum number of students in public school classes for various grade levels; requires compliance by the beginning of the 2010 school year; requires the Legislature, and not local school districts, to pay for the costs associated with reduced class size; prescribes a schedule for phased-in funding to achieve the required maximum class size.

ENDNOTES

[1] "Education Report Card Shows Florida Failing," Florida Education Association, June 25, 2002, accessed via: www.floridaea.org.
[2] Oscar Corral, "McBride Campaigns at Crowded School," *Miami Herald*, Aug. 22, 2002.
[3] Ranking is based on U.S. Census Bureau data reported in *A Statistical View of the 50 United States*, 2001, Morgan Quitno Press.
[4] Language from proposed Constitutional Amendment 9; accessible via: www.smallerclasses.org.
[5] Data from *St. Petersburg Times-Miami Herald* Poll, March 2002; Charles L. Thompson and Elizabeth K. Cunningham, "First in America Special Report: The Lessons of Class Size Reduction," North Carolina Education Research Council, October 2001, p. 1.
[6] Lesley Clark, "Public Favors Smaller Classes, Prekindergarten," *Miami Herald*, March 31, 2002.
[7] Steve Bousquet, "Education Issues Get Support," *St. Petersburg Times*, March 31, 2002.
[8] Joni James and Lesley Clark, "Florida Adds Funds for Pupils But Drops Tax Holiday," Miami Herald, May 14, 2002.
[9] Adam Smith, "Handful of Area Educators Jump From the GOP," *St. Petersburg Times*, Aug. 9, 2002.
[10] Mike Thomas, "Lawmakers Are Still Gambling With Education," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 28, 2002.
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PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY

10 February, 2003

Dear Senator,

Enclosed please find materials to help you understand how smaller class sizes, wherever implemented, have resulted in increased student achievement. I have included this table of contents to describe each document provided here.

Left side

1. *Keeping The Promise To Our Children: The Principles, Process and Policies That Should Guide Florida in Implementing Amendment 9*, a joint Florida's Coalition to Reduce Class Size and People for the American Way report, January 30, 2003.
2. *An Urgent Crisis, An Effective and Affordable Remedy: Amendment 9—The Campaign to Reduce Class Size and Put Florida's Children First*, a joint Florida's Coalition to Reduce Class Size and People for the American Way report, September 2002.
3. *Two Roads to Reform: Comparing the Research on Vouchers and Class-Size Reduction*, People for the American Way Foundation, May 23, 2002.

Right side

1. *Florida Class Size Reduction, Myths and Facts,* People for the American Way.
2. *The Class Size Reduction Program: Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation*, U.S. Department of Education, September 2000.
3. *SAGE Report Links Smaller Classes to Higher Achievement*, Wisconsin Education Association Council, January 31, 2000; Executive Summary, *2000-2001 Evaluation Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program*, SAGE Evaluation Team, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2001.
4. *Benefits of Class Size Reduction*, Class Size Matters (New York).

I've also included my business card in every folder. Please do not hesitate to call me if PFAW can provide any more information or further assistance.

Sincerely,

Nancy Keenan
Education Policy Director

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PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY

Florida Class-Size Reduction: Myths and Facts

Myth: Smaller classes do not lead to improved academic performance.

A wide variety of researchers have concluded that class-size reduction dramatically improves student achievement. These include RAND, Educational Testing Service, the Economic policy Institute, North Carolina Education research Council, and many others. So many, in fact, that the U.S. Department of Education concluded that "studies have consistently identified a positive relationship between reduced class size and improved student performance."

Tennessee's Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) program offers compelling evidence in support of class-size reduction. STAR researchers found that students in smaller classes outperformed their peers in larger classes, were less likely to be retained at the same grade level, and were more likely to graduate.

Wisconsin's class-size reduction program, the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program, has also increased student achievement. In an evaluation that compared SAGE schools with other schools with larger class sizes, 29 of the 30 highest performing classrooms were SAGE classrooms.

Myth: Florida cannot afford to reduce class sizes.

There are a number of responsible options for fully funding class size reduction without raising taxes on working families, increasing college tuition, or cutting services our seniors and children depend on.

Every year the state loses an estimated $23 billion to special-interest tax exemptions and subsidies such as those for adult entertainment, ostrich feed, luxury skyboxes in sports arenas, and the Golf Hall of Fame.

Another option to consider is the repeal of corporate tax breaks. Over the implementation period of Amendment 9, these tax cuts will drain over $20 billion from state coffers even though they only benefit one or two percent of Floridians. While proponents of these tax cuts claim they help stimulate the economy and create jobs, the chief economist for the state's Office of Economic and Demographic Research wrote that Florida would *lose* both jobs and revenue as a result of the corporate tax breaks.

Myth: Reducing class sizes is the responsibility of local school districts.

To keep faith with the voters, the funds required to reduce class sizes must be provided entirely by the state. In fact, the constitutional amendment approved by the voters explicitly states that "payment of the costs associated with reducing class size ... is the responsibility of the state and not of local districts." It would be a complete distortion of voters' will for the state to shift its responsibility onto already overburdened school districts.

Myth: Vouchers are a good way to reduce class sizes.

Vouchers are not an effective way to cut class sizes because private schools cannot accommodate the large number of students necessary to meet the amendment's class-size requirements. Additionally, the voucher approach violates the spirit of Amendment 9 as voters overwhelmingly approved the amendment with the clear understanding that additional classrooms would be built in *public* schools.

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TWO ROADS TO REFORM:

Comparing the Research on Vouchers And Class-Size Reduction

May 23, 2002

Ralph G. Neas, President

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Earlier this year, President Bush signed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or what he called the No Child Left Behind Act. Interestingly, one term appears more than 100 times in ESEA: "scientifically based research."[1] The goal of ESEA's bipartisan supporters, explained recently in an *Education Week* article, is to "base school improvement efforts less on intuition and experience and more on research-based evidence."[2] As the reform debate continues, it is worth examining two distinct proposals—private-school vouchers and class-size reduction—and what the research says about their impact on student achievement.

The U.S. Supreme Court is soon expected to issue a ruling that decides whether the Cleveland voucher program is constitutional. At least as important as whether vouchers are constitutionally sound is the question of whether vouchers are *educationally* sound. What does the research say about vouchers? And are there more sensible and less divisive alternatives—such as reducing class sizes in public schools—that can help low-achieving students?

Both vouchers and class-size reduction are high-profile proposals. But relying on "scientifically based research" to assess these two proposals reveals some major distinctions. While the body of research on vouchers is both small and unconvincing, the corresponding research on smaller classes is both abundant and compelling. Most significantly, researchers have been able to compare the impact that both of these policy alternatives have on student performance. This comparison shows that smaller classes far outpace vouchers in raising student tests scores.[3]

Vouchers: What the Most Recent Research Shows

This week, Harvard University professor Paul E. Peterson is addressing a Heritage Foundation audience to discuss his research on voucher students in various cities, including New York City. Peterson's message is likely to resemble the presentation that he and University of Wisconsin-Madison professor William G. Howell gave only a few weeks ago at a Brookings Institution symposium, reviewing a Peterson-Howell report on a three-year study of voucher students. The three-year study compared a "treatment" group (students who used a voucher to switch to a private school) with a "control" group (students who attended public schools).

In its findings, the Peterson research team reported that African-American voucher students consistently outscored those who remained in public schools. One newspaper trumpeted the Peterson-Howell research in an article headlined: "Scores of blacks rise with vouchers."[4] But this upbeat coverage—and what is likely to be a similar spin by pro-voucher groups in the months ahead—is unjustified by the data, nor does it answer several questions raised by the data. In fact, Peterson and Howell specifically admitted that their three-year findings should not be used as an argument in favor of a "large-scale voucher program" serving all children in an urban school system.[5]

While voucher supporters are likely to focus on the three-year data showing gains for African-American voucher students, there are nagging concerns and questions about the Peterson-Howell data. For example, there were large fluctuations among subgroups and across the various years of the study, even in New York City. It is also worth noting that neither white nor Hispanic voucher students showed any academic gains over their public school peers. Additionally, a review of the New York City data reveals that reading scores actually *declined* for all groups of Hispanic voucher students, except for those in 7th grade. Peterson and Howell have made considerable effort to explain why black scores improved and why white and Hispanic scores did not—but to no avail.[6] All of these considerations help to explain why Peterson and Howell concluded that there is "no overall private school impact of switching to a private school on student test scores ..."[7]

Voucher supporters are putting an upbeat spin on the Peterson-Howell report, even though the authors concluded that there was "no overall private school impact" on the student test scores of those using vouchers.

Finally, this isn't the first time a Peterson-led voucher study yielded a host of questions or concerns. The conclusions drawn by Peterson from a voucher study released in August 2000 were seriously challenged. (The 2000 data were part of the overall three-year study that Peterson and Howell recently released.) Researchers Alex Molnar and Charles Achilles raised concerns about the August 2000 data, warning that the Peterson team's use of averaged results "may make the achievement impact reported appear more generalized than it is."[8] And Mathematica Policy Research, one of the partners in the August 2000 study, was so disturbed by the conclusions drawn by the Peterson team that the firm took the extraordinary step of issuing a press statement entitled "Voucher Claims of Success Are Premature in New York City." Referring to the August 2000 data, Mathematica cautioned policymakers against "setting policy based on the overall modest impacts on test scores."[9]

Findings on Cleveland and Milwaukee Voucher Plans

Over the past few years, other research and analyses of voucher programs have failed to buttress the case being made by voucher supporters. Last fall, the U.S. General Accounting Office reviewed state evaluations and found little or no difference between the academic achievement of voucher students and public school students in Cleveland and Milwaukee—the two major urban school systems with publicly funded voucher programs.[10]

Indiana University researcher Kim Metcalf, who has spent several years studying the Cleveland program, released a report last year comparing groups of voucher students and public school students from the time they entered first grade through the end of second grade. While voucher students had higher total test scores entering first grade, this advantage quickly began to erode. Over this two-year period, the report revealed that the public school students demonstrated average learning gains that were *greater* in language, reading and math than the voucher students.[11]

Voucher supporters have cited isolated data from last year's Indiana University report, claiming that Metcalf's research proves that vouchers boost academic performance. Yet Metcalf himself wrote that the analysis of student test results from voucher schools and public schools "presented no clear or consistent pattern tha[t] can be attributable to [voucher] program participation." Echoing this view, the Ohio Department of Education summed up the study in distinctly lukewarm terms, noting that voucher students "perform at a similar academic level as public school students."[12]

The Milwaukee voucher program has received only one comprehensive state evaluation, conducted in 1995 by a University of Wisconsin-Madison team led by professor John Witte.[13] Reviewing the voucher program's first five years, Witte found no appreciable academic gains in reading and math from vouchers.[14] He also observed that the attrition rates for voucher students were high, especially in the first two years.[15] Using Witte's data, a research team led by Peterson employed different assumptions and statistical techniques, claiming that there was a statistically significant gain for voucher students in the third and fourth years of the program.[16] But this finding was disputed by many in the research community, who argued that by the third year the control and experimental groups were not comparable. The annual attrition rate (about 30 percent)—consisting primarily of students doing poorly in the voucher program—ensured that those students who remained were an academically superior subset, not a random sample.[17] Other aspects of the methodology used by the Peterson team to re-analyze the Milwaukee data have been criticized, including the Peterson team's reliance, in some cases, on tiny samples—in one instance, a sample of 26 students.[18] The Peterson team's re-analysis was described by Witte as a "confusing, tortured effort," and even the pro-voucher *Wall Street Journal* wrote that Peterson was "loose with his claims."[19]

Since the 1995 state evaluation, voucher supporters have shown no enthusiasm for new efforts to examine the program's impact on student achievement. In fact, after the lackluster results of this evaluation were released, Wisconsin legislators eliminated provisions calling for future academic evaluations of the program.[20] Since then, the Legislature has provided only for a single audit by the state's Legislative Audit Bureau in the year 2000. This audit observed: "Some hopes for the program—most notably, that it would increase participating students' academic achievement—cannot be documented, largely because uniform testing is not required in participating schools."[21]

Some voucher supporters have cited research by Princeton University's Cecilia Rouse that reported math gains for Milwaukee voucher students.[22] Yet, the findings Rouse cited were only for the subgroup of students who were in the voucher program over a four-year period. As noted earlier, student attrition rates come into play because Witte found that "voucher students who *left* the [Milwaukee] program for various reasons had lower test scores than those who continued to participate [emphasis in original]."[23] Clearly, a full and accurate assessment of voucher schools considers not simply those students who use a voucher and remain in the voucher school, but, rather, *all* students who entered the voucher program. In simple terms, students who do well in voucher schools are more likely to stay—those doing poorly are more likely to leave or drop out. Additionally, Rouse found that "the [voucher]

effects on the reading scores are as often negative as positive and are nearly always statistically indistinguishable from zero."[24]

The Voucher 'Competition' Myth

Voucher supporters such as researcher Jay Greene claim that vouchers have a positive impact on *public* school students because the threat they pose leads public schools to improve. In a February 2001 report, Greene asserted that the "Florida A+" voucher program led to public school gains. But researchers at Rutgers University and the University of Colorado at Boulder identified serious flaws in Greene's analysis.[25] Stanford University professor Martin Carnoy found that under the accountability system that Florida created *before* vouchers existed, student improvement was greater than after the so-called 'voucher threat' was introduced.[26]

Greene also neglected to consider the significant impact of extra resources, both state and local, which were directed towards Florida's 'F'-rated public schools. These resources enabled the schools to extend the school day, week, and year, as well as strengthen professional development for teachers. These elements—combined with accountability measures—may well have been the real cause of improvements in these Florida public schools.[27]

Voucher supporters claim that public schools won't improve without "competition." Yet, last year, numerous large urban public school districts raised both math and reading scores without the presence of a publicly funded voucher program.

While pro-voucher forces claim that public schools won't improve without "competition" from voucher programs, the evidence dispels this myth. In fact, public school districts in Los Angeles, Baltimore, Dallas, Portland, Minneapolis, San Diego, Birmingham and Seattle raised both their reading and math scores last year *in every grade tested*—and each of these urban districts did so without the presence of a publicly funded voucher program.[28] Indeed, Greene's own research leads to the conclusion that accountability, testing, and increased resources led to public school improvement in Texas, a state which has no publicly funded voucher program.[29]

Voucher supporters also cite Harvard University researcher Caroline Hoxby's finding that competition from private schools spurs improvements in public schools. But Duke University professor Helen Ladd and other analysts have questioned Hoxby's conclusions. In a study published earlier this year, Ladd observed that other researchers "have used better data and alternative methods and have found no positive effects on public school achievement from competition from private schools."[30]

Class Size Reduction: What We Know

In stark contrast to vouchers, the research supporting the benefits of class-size reduction is both ample and compelling. Indeed, a considerable body of research demonstrates that significantly reducing class sizes in the early elementary grades has a major impact in

helping to close the achievement gap between white and minority students. This finding is supported by one of the most large-scale, comprehensive studies ever conducted in education: the Tennessee project called Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio or STAR. The highly respected Harvard statistician Frederick Mosteller has called STAR "one of the most important educational investigations ever carried out."[31]

In an evaluation involving more than 11,000 students, STAR researchers compared the progress of students who were in smaller K-3 classes in 1985-89 (pupil-teacher ratios of 14-16 to 1) to students who attended regular-sized classes. Researchers found that smaller-class students outperformed their peers in regular-sized classes during those years.[32] More significantly, however, the smaller-class students continued to outpace their peers in math, reading and science for many years to come—even long *after* returning to regular-sized classes in later years. In fact, the gap in test scores between students in the smaller classes and the regular classes increased over time.

STAR researchers also found that the black-white gap in taking college-preparatory exams was cut in half for those minorities who had been in smaller classes.[33] Smaller-class students were not only more likely to take college-prep exams, but they also scored higher on these exams.[34] Jeremy Finn, a professor at the State University of New York, has observed that the STAR research "leaves no doubt that small classes have an advantage over larger classes" in raising student achievement.[35]

The benefits of significant class-size reduction have also been demonstrated in other states. Started in 1996, Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) is a statewide class-size reduction program that has enjoyed strong bipartisan support and is targeted to low-income students in grades K-3. SAGE provides participating schools with $2,000 per student to reduce classes to pupil-teacher ratios of 15-1. The program requires participating schools to hold extended hours and provide community services to district residents. SAGE guidelines also require the development of rigorous curriculum and staff development. In the 2001-02 school year, more than 81,000 students statewide are participating in SAGE.[36]

There is extensive research-based evidence supporting SAGE's success in helping to improve student performance. In an evaluation of SAGE and comparison schools, 29 of the top 30 classrooms as measured by student achievement in language arts, reading and math were SAGE classrooms. The achievement gap in language arts and math between African-American and white first-grade students was *reduced* in SAGE classrooms while it *increased* in comparison schools. Black second- and third-grade students in SAGE schools scored higher on every test than their black peers in the comparison schools.[37] Results from the recently released 5th-year evaluation of SAGE reinforce these findings.[38] The intensive and ongoing evaluations of SAGE by Wisconsin officials stand in stark contrast to the Milwaukee voucher program, which was the subject of only one state evaluation—now seven years old.

Moreover, the SAGE findings are consistent with research obtained on the impact of class-size reduction in other states. For example, smaller classes were identified in a RAND study

as one of the "major contributions" to Texas' significant achievement gains during the 1990s.[39]

Class-Size Reduction Versus Vouchers

How does class-size reduction compare with school vouchers? It's a question that we can answer with surprising clarity thanks to a growing body of research.

Princeton University researcher Cecilia Rouse, whose findings have been cited by voucher supporters, conducted a study in 1998 comparing Milwaukee's voucher schools with the city's P-5 schools—public schools with small class sizes and additional targeted funding (similar to SAGE). "The results suggest," Rouse concluded, "that students in P-5 schools have math test score gains similar to those in the [voucher] schools, and that students in the P-5 schools outperform students in the [voucher] schools in reading." Rouse went on to explain: "Given that the pupil-teacher ratios in the P-5 and [voucher] schools are significantly smaller than those in the other public schools, one *potential* explanation for these results is that students perform well in schools with smaller class sizes [emphasis in original]."[40] In other words, improved test scores for some voucher students may have been the result of attending smaller classes.

A 1998 study found that Milwaukee public school students in smaller classes had higher reading scores than those who used vouchers to attend the city's private schools.

Princeton University researchers Alan Krueger and Diane Whitmore compared the effect of attending a smaller class to the effect of receiving a private-school voucher. Despite the serious questions raised about the Peterson team's August 2000 voucher study, Krueger and Whitmore used the study's data on African-American voucher students for the sake of comparison. (Keep in mind, in the August 2000 study African-Americans were the *only* subgroup of voucher students who showed significant gains.) Even in this context, Krueger and Whitmore found that black students who had attended small classes "improved their test performance by around 50 percent more than the gain experienced by black students who attended a private school as a result of receiving a voucher ..."[41]

Although, in statistical terms, class size doesn't emerge as a determining factor in the African-American gains cited in Peterson-Howell's three-year evaluation of voucher students, it is clear that these voucher students were in smaller schools with smaller class sizes, and more after-school and tutorial programs.[42]

Indeed, this is a powerful irony. The African-American voucher students were learning in the very educational climate that many policy analysts have long sought for *public* schools—a climate that is incredibly difficult to create when a state diverts substantial tax dollars to vouchers.

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Amendment 9 - Class Size Reduction

Issue: ***Definition of Terms***

- Extracurricular classes – which classes will be determined to be subject to the new maximum class size requirements, and which will be excluded?
- Average Class Size – will average class size be measured & enforced at the classroom level, school level, district level, or state level? (This matters as we approach the FY 2010/11 deadline, because average class size must be reduced by 2 students per year until the maximums are achieved. Beginning in 2010/11, ***all*** classes which are determined to be subject to the requirements of Amendment 9 must comply with the maximum size limitations).
- "Assigned to Each Teacher" – will this preclude teachers from teaching multiple class periods during the school day? Can more than one teacher be placed in a classroom to meet the CSR requirements?

Issue: ***Implementation Questions***

- How will the state monitor district compliance?
- What actions will occur if districts fail to make appropriate progress?
- What level of flexibility will districts be provided to achieve CSR requirements?
- Can exemptions from CSR requirements be allowed for "choice" programs (i.e.: charter schools, magnet programs, etc.)?
- Should new legislative options be considered (i.e.: CSR vouchers, expanded corporate income tax scholarships, etc.)?
- What incentives can be provided to encourage districts to aggressively & efficiently pursue CSR requirements?
- What should be done to address problems relating to the availability of qualified teachers?
- Should changes to current law be considered to ease the implementation of CSR (i.e.: use of relocatables, small schools requirements, etc.)?

ISSUE: ***Funding***

- Will the Revenue Estimating Conference cost estimates be used (the Governor's recommended budget is based on REC cost estimates), or will revised cost calculations based on updated data and different assumptions be considered?
- How will *operating* funds for CSR be calculated & distributed?
    - Maintenance of equity in per-student funding among districts is a constitutional requirement. Will districts which meet CSR requirements be "penalized" when new funds are distributed?
    - If a district complies with annual CSR requirements in a particular year & has unspent CSR funds remaining, will alternative uses for these funds be allowed? If so, will alternative uses be limited?
    - Will CSR funds be provided to DJJ facilities, Charter Schools, McKay Scholarship recipients, and Opportunity Scholarship recipients?
- How will *capital outlay* funds for CSR be calculated and distributed?
    - Will consideration be given to district local effort for classroom construction?

- Will limitations be placed of the cost and type of facilities which can be constructed with CSR funds?

The Class-Size Reduction Program

Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation

A First-Year Report

U.S. Department of Education
September 2000

Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Michael Cohen
Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education

Joseph Conaty
Director, New Projects Unit

Robert Stonehill
Director, Class-Size Reduction Program

September 2000

Gillian Cohen, Christine Miller, Robert Stonehill and Claire Geddes at the U.S. Department of Education wrote this report.

The Class-Size Reduction Program:

Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation

A First-Year Report

Reducing class size is one of the most important investments we can make in our children's future. Recent research confirms what parents have always known -- children learn better in small classes with good teachers, and kids who start out in smaller classes do better right through their high school graduation.

--President Bill Clinton

Parents and teachers have long known that smaller classes make a difference. Students in smaller classes have higher achievement levels, fewer discipline problems, and more personal attachment to their teachers and classmates. A growing body of well-designed research, including experimental research using random assignment, is confirming this conventional wisdom. In 1998, Congress responded to President Clinton's call for a national initiative to lower class size in the early grades to no more than 18 students. Research indicates that classes that small are effective in helping to improve academic achievement, especially for disadvantaged students.

That year, Congress made a bipartisan commitment to provide a down payment on a proposed seven-year phase-in of the Class Size Reduction program. The fiscal year (FY) 1999 appropriation of $1.2 billion enabled school districts across the nation to hire an estimated 29,000 new teachers for the 1999-2000 school year. This July, the U.S. Department of Education awarded an additional $1.3 billion in FY 2000 funds to enable states and local school districts to continue their class-size reduction efforts. This report highlights the benefits of the Class-Size Reduction program after just one year of implementation. Though this is only a modest beginning to reach our nationwide goal, the past year saw 1.7 million young children learning in smaller, more personalized, classrooms.

The Class-Size Reduction Program Is Making A Difference

Too many children in this country spend their early school years in overcrowded classrooms. As a result, children – particularly poor and minority children – do not receive the individualized attention they need. They do not learn to read well and independently, and are too likely to fall through the cracks.

Prior to the implementation of the federal Class-Size Program and similar initiatives in several states, more than 85 percent of our students were in classes with over 18 children, and about 33 percent were in classes of 25 or more students.[1]

[1] Data from *Study of Education Resources and Federal Funding. U.S. Department of Education, 2000.*

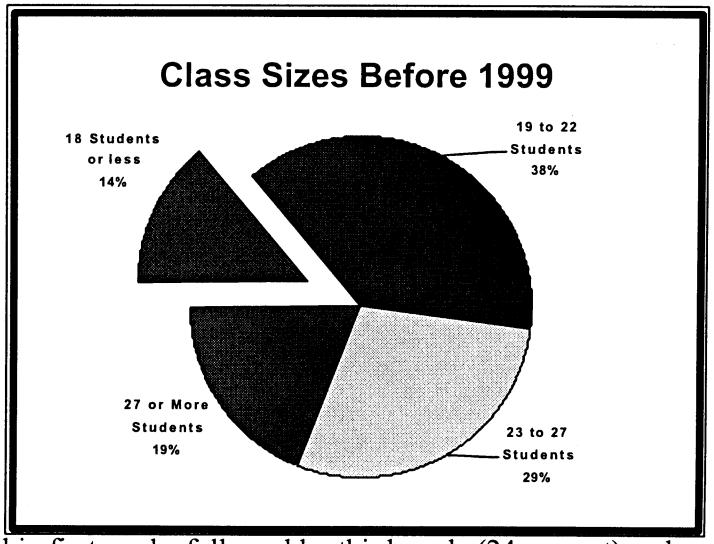
However, after just one year of implementation, the federal Class-Size Reduction Program is already helping local communities lower class size in the early grades. In 90,000 classrooms (primarily in high-needs schools), the average class size in grades 1-3 has been reduced from 23 to 18. Smaller classes give children across the country the opportunity for a solid foundation in the basics and increase their chances of academic success in the later grades.

The Class-Size Reduction program has helped an estimated:

- 1.7 million children in the early grades receive instruction in smaller, more personalized classes;
- 90,000 teachers who now teach more manageably sized classes;
- 23,000 schools – almost one-third of the nation's elementary schools – that have hired one or more new teachers; and,
- 15,000 school districts that improved teacher recruitment and hiring or provided professional development to help teachers maximize the benefits of smaller classes.

Last year, the Class-Size Reduction program enabled schools to hire approximately 29,000 new teachers. As a direct result, 61,000 additional teachers saw their class sizes shrink.

- In the 1999-2000 school year, districts receiving Class-Size Reduction funds reported that their classes would have been significantly larger without such funds. Districts reported that almost half (49 percent) of the classes would have had 23 or more students per class, nearly a third (32 percent) would have had 25 or more, and 17 percent would have had 27 or more students per class. National data, shown in the chart below, paints the same general picture.[2] Without federal funding, 86 percent of classes would have been larger than the recommended average class size of 18 students.



- However, schools that hired teachers with their Class-Size Reduction funds were able to reduce the average class size from about 23 students to 18 in the targeted grades.

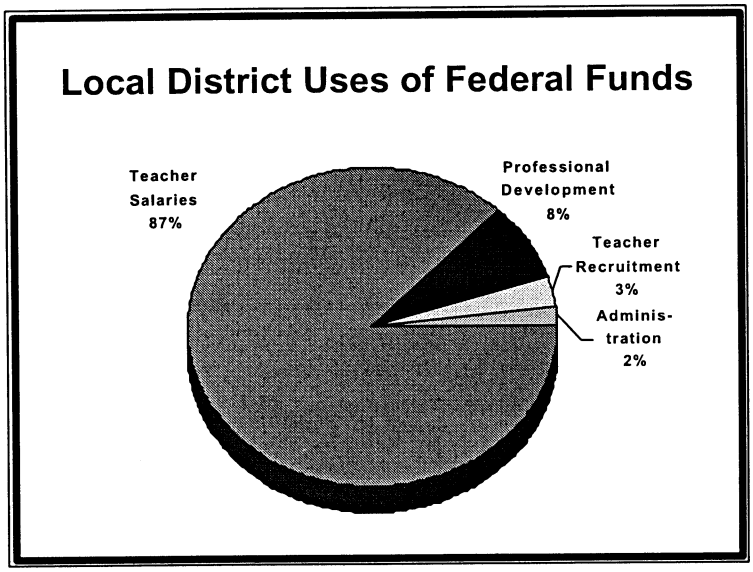
- Approximately 86 percent of hired teachers were placed in the early grades. The greatest number (39 percent) were placed in first grade, followed by third grade (24 percent) and then second grade (23 percent). About 15 percent were placed in other grades, usually in districts where they already had small classes in the early grades.

[2] Data from the Study of Education Resources and Federal Funding, U.S. Department of Education, 2000.

- About one percent of the teachers hired were special education teachers.

Class-Size Reduction Funds Directly Impact Classrooms

Every dollar provided for the Class-Size Reduction program goes to local school districts. No funds are retained at the national or state levels for administration. As the chart below illustrates, 87 percent of the funds are being used to hire teachers while only 2 percent of the money is used for administrative activities at the local level.



Federal Class-Size Reduction funds help create more manageable classrooms. This allows teachers to focus on teaching and learning and spend less time dealing with discipline problems.

Small classes and small schools lay the foundation for safe schools. They promote stronger bonds between teachers and students that lead to an improved school climate and fewer discipline problems and disruptions. More personal classroom environments allow teachers to give more individualized attention to each of their students, permitting them a better opportunity to identify troubled children and recommend counseling before violence occurs.

Smaller classes help improve teacher morale. Teachers in smaller classes spend less time on discipline and classroom management and more time providing instruction to children. This raises their level of job satisfaction. In addition, smaller classes can enable teachers to implement strategies learned in preparation programs but which they are unable to practice because of the sheer number of students in their classrooms.

Smaller Classes Result in Better Teaching and Learning

Local districts report using Class-Size Reduction funds to directly support urgent priorities and improve achievement where the need is the greatest. Smaller classes are rapidly becoming an integral component of school reform efforts. For instance:

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools.

Washington, D.C. is one of a number of districts that used their Class-Size Reduction funds to support local efforts to turn around low-performing schools. The District targeted its $5.6 million allocation to 32 schools identified as low-achieving. Each site that received a grant hired one additional teacher. Hendley Elementary used its money to hire an additional teacher for the first grade, allowing it to reduce class sizes from 24 to 18 in all four of its first-grade classrooms. The school met all six of its performance objectives for the 1999-2000 school year, including a decrease in the number of students in first grade scoring below the basic level. The District also registered an increase in the number at both the proficient and advanced levels in both reading and math. First-grade teachers at Hendley report greater satisfaction with students' achievement, motivation, and skills when they are able to provide instruction to a smaller number of children.

Columbus, Ohio used its $3 million Class-Size Reduction allocation to hire 58 fully certified teachers, placing them in 13 high-poverty, low-performing schools. In these schools, the program has reduced class size in grades one through three from 25 students to approximately 15. These schools, as well as others in Columbus, are implementing proven models of reading instruction, such as *Success for All*. Teachers receive the professional development and support needed for effective implementation of these models.

Improving Reading Achievement

Anne Arundel County, Maryland combined federal, state and local funds to support its early reading initiative. Anne Arundel received a Class-Size Reduction allocation of approximately $600,000 and hired 19 first- and second-grade teachers for their highest-need schools. In 2000-2001, it will hire three teachers who will be deployed in the same manner. The district also received county funding to hire 30 more teachers to further reduce class sizes. By coordinating the use of its local and federal funds, Anne Arundel will reduce class sizes in grades one and two from an average of 25 children per class to an average of 15. Georgetown East Elementary, a high-poverty school that also used federal Title I funds to reduce class sizes, improved their first and second grade reading performance to the point that the school is now among the top three elementary schools in the county. Other Maryland school districts, such as Montgomery County, have used federal, state, and local class-size reduction funds to boost the impact of early reading initiatives.

West Middlesex Area School District, Pennsylvania. West Middlesex used its 1999 Class-Size Reduction allocation to hire two new first grade teachers (one at Luther Low Elementary and one at Oakview Elementary). As a result of the two new teachers, each school reduced class sizes in the first grade from 23 students per class to 18. During the 1999-2000 school year, students' scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading, language, and mathematics improved over the scores from the previous year. The students' overall grade equivalent scores increased from 1.9 to 2.1.

South Delta School District, Mississippi, located in the rural west-central Delta region, serves two high-poverty counties where all students are eligible for free lunch and all schools are designated as Title I "school-wides." The district used its $118,760 allocation to hire three teachers, enabling the district to reduce average class sizes in grades 1 through 3 in its elementary school from 26 students to 21. Having fewer students in each class has helped South Delta to implement its new reading initiative more effectively. Teachers now have more time to analyze students' particular strengths and weaknesses through their Analytical Reading Inventory and can provide more one-on-one instruction to better meet students' individual needs. Teachers also report having more time to plan, allowing them to develop more creative and engaging lessons for students.

Trinity Area School District, Washington, Pennsylvania. The Trinity Area School District used its 1999 allocation to hire two teachers to reduce class size in the first and second grades at Trinity South Elementary from 25 to 15 students. After just one year of this intervention, first graders improved by four percentage points over the previous year on the district-level writing standards; second graders showed a three percent increase. The improvement in reading was even more dramatic. Between 1999 and 2000, the number of first-grade students scoring at 80 percent or higher on performance tasks improved by 12 percentage points. For second graders, these numbers improved by 21 percentage points.

Improving Individualized Instruction and Classroom Management.

Rockford School District 205, Illinois. Rockford, the third largest school district in Illinois, has a poverty rate of 62 percent. With the $797,963 it received, the district hired 19 additional primary grade teachers. As a result, the district was able to reduce the number of students in 43 other classrooms (including 35 first grade classrooms). Without federal support, the average class size in these grades would have been about 26 students. With Class-Size Reduction funds, Rockford reduced class sizes in the targeted grades to 17-18 students per class. When surveyed, teachers said they were able to increase the attention given students and improve early identification of reading problems as a result of the smaller classes.

Fredericksburg County, Virginia. Fredericksburg used its Class-Size Reduction funds to hire two third grade teachers to team teach at the Hugh Mercer Elementary School. While one teacher works with small groups of students to provide instruction in reading, writing, or mathematics, the other teacher works with the remaining students. At any given time, students are receiving instruction in a group no larger than 18 students.

Federal Funds Go Where They Will Have the Greatest Impact

Because federal Class-Size Reduction funds are targeted to districts with the highest concentrations of children in poverty as well as those with the highest overall enrollments, large urban districts have received a significant portion of the available funds. Within these districts, monies to hire teachers are generally targeted to schools with the greatest needs or with the largest class sizes.

The following table shows how some of the nation's largest districts have used their Class-Size Reduction funds to hire additional teachers.[3]

Estimates of Teachers Hired With Federal Class-Size Reduction Funds in Urban School Districts

School District	Current Class-Size Reduction Allocation	Teachers Hired	Estimated Allocation for 2001
Anchorage	$1,845,702	40	$2,654,546
Atlanta	$3,110,313	58	$4,938,553
Birmingham	$1,562,510	23	$2,138,425
Boston	$3,545,000	38	$4,992,309
Broward County, FL	$4,132,500	74	$6,617,673
Cleveland	$4,981,000	82	$6,791,335
Columbus	$3,037,137	58	$4,140,978
Dallas	$5,171,868	75	$7,808,009
Denver	$2,583,983	12	$3,699,074
Des Moines	$854,694	29	$1,228,049
Detroit	$13,315,320	240	$18,095,999
El Paso	$1,700,000	51	$2,566,503
Fort Worth	$2,513,796	58	$3,795,097
Houston	$8,379,760	167	$12,650,988
Indianapolis	$2,649,205	32	$3,791,959
Jefferson County	$2,779,119	92	$3,737,504
Long Beach	$2,700,000	15	$4,316,221
Los Angeles	$26,300,000	203	$42,043,188
Memphis	$3,861,000	76	$5,451,375
Mesa, AZ	$1,119,873	32	$1,660,265
Miami-Dade	$10,718,155	207	$17,163,762
Milwaukee	$6,218,480	97	$8,784,270
Nashville	$1,811,871	33	$2,558,194
New Orleans	$4,520,913	109	$5,795,426
New York City	$61,190,120	808	$95,806,879
Norfolk	$1,393,861	27	$1,994,396
Oklahoma City	$1,482,261	41	$2,279,899
Omaha	$1,508,098	30	$2,150,783
Orange County	$2,550,276	72	$4,076,872
Philadelphia	$12,795,416	288	$17,298,116
Pittsburgh	$2,365,675	42	$3,198,155
Richmond	$1,200,000	25	$1,717,012
Rochester	$2,376,000	41	$3,720,162
Sacramento	$1,900,000	31	$3,037,341
Salt Lake City	$661,092	20	$943,490
San Antonio	$2,886,204	46	$4,357,324
San Diego	$3,868,104	63	$6,183,552
San Francisco	$1,606,764	37	$2,568,573
Seattle	$1,560,686	37	$2,203,601
Tucson	$1,604,269	52	$2,378,404

[3] Council of Great City Schools (1999). U.S. Department of Education budget estimates
Note: Estimates for 2001 are based on each district's share of its State's allocation

New York City Takes Big Steps with Smaller Class Sizes

For many years, class sizes in New York City have been among the largest in New York State, averaging about 28 children per class in elementary schools. In 1999-2000, New York City received $61 million in Federal Class-Size Reduction funds. In addition, the city received some $49 million in state funds to reduce class size. The state and federal funds were used to create about 950 new, smaller classes in grades K-3, with an average of about 20 students per class. New classes were created in 530 of the district's 675 elementary schools. Since every new class that was created helped reduce the size of other classes in that grade, the New York City Board of Education estimates that 30 percent of students in kindergarten through grade 3 are in smaller classes as a result of the initiative.

The independent Educational Priorities Board recently completed a study of the first year of the class-size reduction program in New York City. Among improvements reported as a result of smaller classes were:

- Noticeable declines in the number of disciplinary referrals;
- Improved teacher morale;
- a focus on prevention rather than remediation; and
- higher levels in classroom participation by students.

In addition, the study noted that while it was still too early to make definitive judgments, students placed in smaller classes appeared to be learning faster than when they were in larger classes. In schools where there was not the space to create enough new classes, some of the federal money was used for an "alternative approach." One such approach was to provide classrooms with an additional teacher to give more individualized and small group instruction to students for a significant block of time on a regular basis. The Board of Education hired only teachers for this purpose, not paraprofessionals, in line with research that shows that the educational benefits of pairing a paraprofessional with a teacher in a regular-size classes are negligible.

In summary, the report offers the following recommendation:

> *At this point, the New York City class-size reduction program has every indication of success, and will most likely lead to significant improvements in student outcomes if the legislative support for this program is sustained and expanded.*

Source: Educational Priorities Panel (1999). *Smaller is Better: First-hand Reports of Early Grade Class Reduction in New York City Public Schools.* New York, NY: Author.

Teachers Report Results From Reducing Class Size

Smaller class sizes allow our teachers and students to do the best they can. Teachers do not teach most effectively when they are hampered by the burden of too many students in the classroom.
--U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley

Teachers throughout the country report experiencing significant benefits from smaller classes. For instance:

> *I had a good idea of each child's basic ability by the first week of school, because I had more time to spend with each child individually. I knew very early on who to watch for potential learning and behavior problems....Each child also had more time to share his thoughts and ideas in both oral and written form... There also were few behavior problems...Since everything that we did this year took so much less time than usual, we were able to do so much more...*
>
> **--Teacher in West Middlesex, Pennsylvania**

> *We have had practically no discipline problems. The children are more like a team and they expect the best from each other. This saves a great mount of our instructional time. ...I had only one child (from my class of 19) fail reading for the first six-week grading period. This alone is proof that the children are receiving more individualized instruction and they are greatly benefiting from class size reduction.*
>
> **--Teacher in Mississippi**

> *All children in this city, this state, this country are entitled to the benefits of smaller classes. Speaking as an educator, it should not be a privilege, it should be a right.*
>
> **--Principal Norma Genao, P.S. 185, Harlem, New York**

Supporting State Efforts: Sparking a National Movement

Over 20 states across the country have instituted their own efforts to lower class size, and the flexibility of the federal program has allowed for close coordination between the federal and state programs. Last year, at least two new states – Georgia and Massachusetts – began investing their own resources in smaller classes and improving student achievement. In some other states, class-size reduction initiatives have been in place for more than a decade. For instance:

- ***Massachusetts*** appropriated $18 million to the Aid to Reduce Class Size in grades K-3. The initiative will be targeted to schools in which at least 22 percent or more of the children come from low income households. The funds may also be used to extend half-day kindergarten to full-day kindergarten. The first installment of the Aid to Reduce Class Size funds will be used in the 2000-2001 school year.

- ***Indiana*** began its program to reduce class size - known as "Prime Time" - in 1984. As a result, some districts already had achieved the targeted levels of 18 students in first grade and 20 students in third grade when federal funds became available. Of the 328 districts in the state, 268 participated in the federal program in 1999-2000, with 20 of the districts choosing to reduce class size in intermediate and middle school classrooms. Other districts utilized federal funds by reducing primary classrooms even further, or by hiring specialists to teach reading in small groups. A total of 59 districts used all of their funds for professional development.

- ***Minnesota*** began its statewide program in 1993. In the latest two-year budget cycle, $100 million was allotted to reduce class size, about $50 million each for the 1999 and 2001 school years. The program emphasizes kindergarten and first grade, and a class-size goal of 17 students. Since the availability of federal Class-Size Reduction funds, some small, rural districts were able to coordinate the use of their federal and state funds to hire one teacher. Although a few districts hired teachers for the fourth and fifth grades, the vast majority – 95 percent – focused on kindergarten through third grades.

Class-Size Reduction in Wisconsin Grows Dramatically

Federal Class-Size Reduction funds are helping Wisconsin advance the reform efforts begun in 1996 through the SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) program, which helps participating schools reduce student-teacher ratios to 15:1 in grades K-3. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, evidence of the SAGE program's success has prompted the state legislature and the governor to dramatically increase funding to allow 400-500 more elementary schools to participate next school year. In FY 2000, SAGE will be funded at $58.8 million. In FY 1999, Wisconsin received $20.1 million in Federal funds that local districts used to hire approximately 475 teachers. Of that total, districts used $1.4 million (7 percent) to provide professional development to teachers.

According to the third-year evaluation report of the program, SAGE is fostering an enthusiasm for learning that is boosting student achievement. Results from achievement tests show statistically higher performance for SAGE students across all grade levels when compared to comparison schools with similar characteristics. African-American SAGE students scored lower on a pretest than African-American students in comparison schools but made significantly larger gains and surpassed achievement by African-American students in comparison schools on the post-tests. The study is finding that smaller classes provide:

- high levels of classroom efficiency;
- a positive classroom atmosphere;
- expanded learning opportunities; and
- enthusiasm and achievement among both students and teachers.

The federal program has been able to complement SAGE and support local reform efforts. The U.S. Department of Education has worked with Wisconsin to eliminate barriers to class-size reduction efforts in local districts. For example, Wisconsin was granted waivers allowing districts to use more than 15 percent of their funds for professional development and to serve children in kindergarten.

Source: Molnar, A., Smith, P., Zahorik,J., Palmer, A., Halbach, A. and Ehrle, K. (2000). Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Class Size Reduction Program: Achievement Effects, Teaching and Classroom Implementation. *The CEIC Review*, Volume 9, Number 2 (March).

California's Class-Size Reduction Program Continues to Develop and Show Results

California established its statewide class-size reduction program beginning with the 1997-1998 school year. An ongoing study of the program is showing that smaller classes have boosted student achievement in communities across the state for the second year in a row. Children throughout California, regardless of their socioeconomic background, race or ethnicity, are benefiting from being in smaller classes.

- Third grade students in smaller classes performed better on achievement tests than third graders in larger classes for the second year in a row. These achievement gains persisted after the students returned to larger classes in fourth grade.
- In 1998-1999, over 1.8 million students in 92,000 classrooms (K-3) benefited from reduced class size. Over 92 percent of California students in K-3 were in classes of 20 or smaller, and only 9 districts in the State were not participating in the initiative.
- The percentage of fully certified teachers in grades K-3, which had dropped from 98 percent in 1995 to 88 percent in 1997, remained fairly steady in the third year of class-size reduction, dropping only 1 percent further in 1998 (to 87 percent).

The federal program allows California the flexibility needed to address the serious problems of teacher quality and to reduce class sizes in the schools that need it the most. In the 1999-2000 school year (which has not yet been included in the ongoing state evaluation), districts in California:

- used 25 percent of their federal CSR funds for professional development to upgrade the skills of teachers, an amount triple the rate of other states;
- used $129,177,936 of these funds to hire about 2,000 new teachers; and
- assigned three-quarters of these new teachers to grades 4 and 5, thus enabling the class-size reduction initiative to extend beyond grade 3.

Federal Class-Size Reduction funds are helping California expand its statewide initiative in several important areas. For example:

- The federal program is targeted to the neediest schools, where the research shows that students can benefit most from reduced class sizes. In this way, the federal program sends more of its funds to disadvantaged schools that have not yet fully benefited from the California program. This can help teachers become fully certified and schools can hire additional fully certified teachers. The federal program also takes very seriously the requirement that funds be used to hire only fully certified teachers. The U.S. Department of Education sent a notice to all district superintendents, including all those in California, reminding them of this requirement.
- The federal program provides resources to hire teachers before requiring classes to be small. The California program mandates that districts reduce their class sizes before they receive any funds. This created a financial hardship for some districts. The federal program distributes resources up front, so districts can hire as many teachers as they can afford to without having to take resources from other programs.

Source: Stecher, B.M. and Bohrnstedt, G.W., Eds. (2000). *Class size reduction in California: 1998-99 evaluation findings.* Class-Size Reduction Consortium, Year 2 Evaluation Report. Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research.

Research Continues to Show that Small Classes Boost Achievement

Evidence continues to accumulate that shows that reducing class size improves student achievement, reduces discipline problems, and provides a lasting benefit to both students and teachers. During the past year, more and more research studies showing the positive effects of reducing class size have been completed, including:

- *The Tennessee Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio) Data* - New reports from the Project STAR class-size reduction experiment clearly show that students who spent more years in small classes realized greater gains in student achievement in all subjects than did students who participated for fewer years. They also show the benefits of participating in smaller classes continued well beyond the time the students were in small classes.[4]

- *The Wisconsin SAGE Program* - New results from Wisconsin add independent evidence of the benefits of smaller classes. After two years, the impact of reduced class size in Wisconsin's SAGE program appears consistent with the Tennessee STAR study results. The size of the SAGE evaluation and the strength of its results suggest that class-size reduction in early grades yields significant gains in student achievement. SAGE results also suggest that high-quality team teaching (where two fully qualified teachers share a classroom with 30 or more students) has results similar to those obtained in self-contained classrooms.[5]

- *National Assessment of Educational Progress Data* - A new RAND study, led by David Grissmer, examined 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from representative samples of 2,500 students in 44 states to look at the effect of state characteristics, including class size, on student achievement. The study showed that, controlling for students' family backgrounds, states with the lowest pupil-teacher ratios in the early grades had the highest NAEP scores.[6]

- *State Assessment Data* - The American Institutes for Research analyzed the performance of a national sample of schools on their respective state assessments. The study concluded that reduced class size is significantly related to higher academic performance, particularly in reading. The positive impact of smaller classes on reading achievement also was found in middle and high schools. This study also showed that students benefited not only from small class sizes but gained additional benefit from attending high schools with lower enrollment overall.[7]

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[4] Finn, J., Gerber, S., Farber, S., and Achilles, C. (2000). Teacher Aides: An Alternative to Small Classes? *The CEIC Review*, Volume 9, Number 2 (March).
Boyd-Zaharias, J. and Pate-Bain, H. (2000). Early and New Findings from Tennessee's Project STAR. *The CEIC Review*, Volume 9, Number 2 (March).

[5] Molnar et al, 2000.

[6] Grissmer, D., Flanagan, A., Kawata, J. and Williamson, S. (2000). *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

[7] McLaughlin, D. and Dori, G. (forthcoming). School-level Correlates of Reading and Mathematics Achievement in Public Schools. Pp. 189-236 in Grissmer, D. and Ross, M. (Eds.) *Analytic Issues in the Assessment of Student Achievement.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

This overwhelming body of evidence from independent researchers using different data and methodologies, and both experimental and quasi-experimental methods, clearly demonstrates that reducing class sizes in the early grades improves student achievement.

Investing Wisely: Reducing Class Size as a Cost-Effective Strategy

The accumulating evidence not only shows that class-size reduction is an effective strategy for improving academic performance, but also is a cost-effective one, particularly for students who need help the most. For instance:

- *National Data* - The RAND report described above also concludes that "...to raise achievement scores, the most efficient and effective use of education dollars is to target states with higher proportions of minority and poor students *with funding for lower pupil-teacher ratios*, more widespread kindergarten efforts, and more adequate teaching resources." [8]

- *Tennessee STAR Data* – Because teachers are expensive, hiring paraprofessionals is frequently cited as an alternative investment. However, Jeremy Finn (a professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo), after a careful reexamination of the STAR data, found that adding paraprofessionals to the classroom does little to improve student achievement. He concluded that resources used to hire teaching assistants in the classroom could be better spent on reducing class size by hiring qualified teachers.

- *Reanalysis of Previous Research* – In his recent research, Alan Kreuger, an economist at Princeton University and the National Bureau of Economic Research, concludes that there are substantial and significant returns to reducing class size in the early grades.[9] Kreuger also argues that resources would be optimally allocated if targeted toward those who would benefit most from smaller classes - children and schools in high poverty districts. Kreuger's findings are based on reanalyses of data from literature reviews conducted by Eric Hanushek (a professor at the University of Rochester), in which the author concluded that class-size reduction is not a cost-effective investment.[10]

During the past year, researchers, policy makers, and educators participated in a national conference sponsored to address a broad range of questions related to implementation, including recruitment, professional development and student behavior.[11] In general, the research on class size suggests that teachers of smaller classes confront fewer discipline problems, cover subject matter in more depth, have more one-to-one contact with students, and keep better track of student progress. School principals and district superintendents also report that smaller classes have allowed them to establish and maintain better relationships with students, parents and families. These are the type of improvements that save school districts money over time.[12, 13]

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[8] Grissmer, D., Flanagan, A., Kawata, J., and Williamson, S. (2000). *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

[9] Kreuger, A. (2000). An Economist's View of Class-Size Research. CEIC Review, Volume 9, No. 2 (March).

[10] Hanushek, E. (1999). Some Findings From an Independent Investigation of the Tennessee STAR Experiment and From Other Investigations of Class Size Effects. Pp. 143-164 in Special Issue-Class Size: Issues and New Findings. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Volume 21, Number 2 (Summer).

[11] Wang, M. (2000). How Small Classes Help Teachers Do Their Best: Recommendations from a National Invitational Conference. *The CEIC Review*, Volume 9, Number 2 (March).

[12] Brophy, J. (2000). How Might Teachers Make Smaller Classes Better Classes? *The CEIC Review*, Volume 9, Number 2 (March). Achilles, C. (1999). *Let's Put Kids First, Finally: Getting Class Size Right.* Thousand Oaks,

The Federal Class-Size Reduction Program: How It Works

The U.S. Department of Education's Class-Size Reduction program was enacted just over a year ago as part of the 1999 Department of Education Appropriations Act. With that bipartisan legislation, Congress made a $1.2 billion down payment on President Clinton's proposal to help local communities hire 100,000 qualified teachers over seven years to reduce class size in grades one through three to a national average of 18 students per class. In FY 2000, Congress provided a small increase that brought the appropriation to $1.3 billion. This year, the president's budget proposal asks Congress to provide an additional $450 million in funding, raising the total to $1.75 billion for the 2001-2002 school year. This funding increase will enable local communities to hire as many as 20,000 additional teachers, for a total of 49,000 teachers hired with Class-Size Reduction funds.

Program funds are distributed to states by a defined formula. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico participate in the program (See Appendix A). Since needs are greatest in the poorest communities, and because research shows that smaller classes provide the greatest benefits to the most disadvantaged students, the program targets funds to high-poverty communities. Each state distributes 80 percent of the funds to school districts based on the number of poor children in each district. The remaining 20 percent is distributed on the basis of total enrollment.

Class-Size Reduction funds go directly to our nation's classrooms. Every dollar appropriated by Congress is allocated to local school districts. No funds may be used for federal or state administrative costs, and within school districts, no more than three percent of the money may be used for administrative costs. Because small classes make the greatest difference when teachers are well-trained, school districts may use up to 25 percent of the funds for providing professional development to both newly hired and experienced teachers. The remainder of the funds may be used for recruiting and hiring fully qualified regular and special education teachers and teachers of children with special needs, including teachers certified through state and local alternative routes.

Because average class size varies considerably from district to district, and often from school to school within a district, districts are encouraged to target program resources to schools with the highest average class sizes and the children most in need of more individualized instruction. The Class-Size Reduction Program provides flexibility to accommodate these school districts, as well as the growing number of districts that will reach a class-size target of 18 students as a result of the program. Districts that have already reduced class size in the early grades to 18 students (or reached comparable state goals) have flexibility. They may use program funds to make further reductions in those grades, to reduce class size in other grades, or to take other steps to improve the quality of teaching in small classes.

CA: Corwin Press. Achilles, C. and Finn, J. (2000). Should Class Size Be A Cornerstone for Education Policy? *The CEIC Review*, Volume 9, Number 2 (March).

[13] Hanson, M. (2000). Using Class-Size Reduction Research to Create a Learning Community: A Case Report of Gundry Elementary School. *The CEIC Review*, Volume 9, Number 2 (March).

Making Class-Size Reduction Even More Effective

In the 2000-2001 school year, $1.3 billion is available for the second year of the Class-Size Reduction program. These funds will enable districts to continue to support the teachers hired during the previous school year and, depending upon the size of a district's allocation and its needs, may allow districts to hire more teachers or carry out additional recruiting or professional development activities.

In addition, a few modifications were made to the Class-Size Reduction program requirements to help local districts implement the program more effectively. These changes are in direct response to state and district concerns. Among the modifications made were:

- Providing districts that receive allocations less than the amount necessary to hire an additional teacher with greater flexibility in the uses of their funds;
- Including kindergarten as one of the early grades;
- Placing even more emphasis on ensuring that teachers hired with program funds are fully qualified;
- Allowing states and districts to substitute state or local class-size reduction goals for the national goal; and,
- Inserting new public reporting requirements for states, participating districts, and schools.

Further Reductions Will Help Meet a Critical National Priority

It is essential that federal funds be invested in *proven* education reforms - approaches that produce results consistently and reliably. Students and taxpayers deserve nothing less. A growing body of solid research shows that reducing class size meets this test, as do the experiences of some 1.7 million students in 23,000 schools and 90,000 classrooms nationwide.

Reducing class size is not a silver bullet. We must continue to see that all students have access to high standards, well-prepared teachers, increased public school choice, and more accountable schools. Many students need the extended learning time provided by afterschool and summer school programs, along with extra help from teachers, parents, tutors and mentors. But providing students with smaller classes must be part of our strategy to improve our schools. With the evidence now available, there are no excuses for not acting now.

That is why in 1998 President Clinton proposed a seven-year program to bring class size in the early grades to a national average of 18 students per class. Twice, Congress has responded on a bipartisan basis to the president's proposal, providing enough funds to help local communities hire some 29,000 additional teachers. This year the administration has proposed to expand the effort by seeking $1.75 billion to help local communities hire an additional 20,000 teachers. The net effect of this investment will be to substantially reduce class size in a total of 150,000 classrooms, and to provide higher quality and more personalized instruction to approximately 2.5 million children. We are confident that this investment, which will be used to place well-trained and highly qualified teachers into classrooms with a manageable number of children, will significantly bolster student achievement around the nation.

Contact Us!

For more Information on the Class-Size Reduction Program, contact the U.S. Department of Education by:

- Internet: www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/
- E-mail: class_size@ed.gov
- Fax: (202) 260-8969

Appendix A—Class-Size Reduction Allocation Estimates for FY 2001, by State

State	FY 1999 Allocation	FY 2000 Allocation	FY 2001 Estimate
ALABAMA	$19,413,279	$21,039,181	$26,568,688
ALASKA	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
ARIZONA	17,508,087	18,974,426	25,956,565
ARKANSAS	11,623,964	12,597,496	16,771,634
CALIFORNIA	129,177,934	139,996,859	206,503,890
COLORADO	13,164,489	14,267,043	18,845,486
CONNECTICUT	11,353,179	12,304,031	15,971,909
DELAWARE	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
FLORIDA	51,848,131	56,190,521	83,028,189
GEORGIA	29,909,345	32,414,315	47,490,039
HAWAII	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
IDAHO	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
ILLINOIS	50,137,659	54,336,793	68,551,170
INDIANA	20,096,000	21,779,082	28,764,560
IOWA	9,449,330	10,240,731	13,577,075
KANSAS	9,582,885	10,385,472	13,535,643
KENTUCKY	19,641,601	21,286,626	26,415,049
LOUISIANA	29,471,026	31,939,287	37,779,350
MAINE	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
MARYLAND	17,485,082	18,949,494	24,813,476
MASSACHUSETTS	22,447,648	24,327,685	31,612,299
MICHIGAN	50,275,610	54,486,298	68,326,363
MINNESOTA	16,662,118	18,057,605	23,272,582
MISSISSIPPI	19,208,820	20,817,599	24,146,938
MISSOURI	20,568,788	22,291,467	29,426,014
MONTANA	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
NEBRASKA	5,827,594	6,315,667	8,311,057
NEVADA	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
NEW HAMPSHIRE	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
NEW JERSEY	27,414,745	29,710,787	39,622,535
NEW MEXICO	9,619,782	10,425,459	14,790,712
NEW YORK	104,517,491	113,271,050	163,730,161
NORTH CAROLINA	24,678,787	26,745,687	36,217,944
NORTH DAKOTA	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
OHIO	46,139,496	50,003,776	62,908,804
OKLAHOMA	13,529,819	14,662,970	20,810,521
OREGON	11,564,476	12,533,025	16,291,963
PENNSYLVANIA	50,982,529	55,252,423	68,923,253
PUERTO RICO	40,440,447	43,827,419	53,729,060
RHODE ISLAND	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
SOUTH CAROLINA	14,495,110	15,709,106	22,032,804
SOUTH DAKOTA	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
TENNESSEE	20,066,133	21,746,713	28,331,524
TEXAS	97,206,460	105,347,705	146,753,343
UTAH	7,691,587	8,335,773	10,977,199
VERMONT	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
VIRGINIA	21,038,247	22,800,245	30,102,427
WASHINGTON	19,619,284	21,262,440	27,701,322
WEST VIRGINIA	11,301,032	12,247,517	15,016,312
WISCONSIN	20,118,645	21,803,624	28,419,744
WYOMING	5,623,097	6,094,043	8,087,314
Outlying Areas/BIA	6,000,000	6,000,000	8,750,000
Evaluation	0	0	2,000,000
Total	$1,200,000,000	$1,300,000,000	$1,750,000,000

More than 1,000 enthusiastic supporters pack SAGE conference in Milwaukee [3/7/00]

SAGE report links smaller class size to higher student achievement [1/31/00]

Governor signs budget that increases SAGE funding [10/27/99]

Small class sizes can help reduce bullying [6/3/99]

SAGE scores victory in budget committee [5/21/99]

STAR and SAGE: Column by NEA Pres. Bob Chase [5/6/99]

200 visit legislators on SAGE Day at Capitol [5/3/99]

[News Headline Archive]

SAGE Stories

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SAGE Report Links Smaller Classes to Higher Achievement

Smaller class sizes can lead to higher student achievement, according to the third annual official evaluation of Wisconsin's highly successful SAGE class-size reduction program.

The report by researchers at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee again found that students participating in the SAGE program scored higher than a comparison group of students in traditional larger classes. Similar results were recorded in the two previous official evaluations.

The Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program provides state funding to help reduce class sizes from kindergarten through 3rd grade in schools with large concentrations of children from low-income families. SAGE classrooms have student-teacher ratios of 15 to 1. The program currently operates in about 80 schools. The governor and Legislature have allocated enough additional money to expand it to about 400 more schools next year.

The program is very successful in helping to narrow the achievement gap between black and white students, according to the new evaluation. Black SAGE students made significantly larger gains last year than their counterparts in non-SAGE comparison schools, researchers reported.

The researchers – Alex Molnar, Philip Smith and John Zahorik – examined test scores on the May 1999 Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. They compared scores from the 30 schools that have been participating in SAGE since its inception three years ago to a group of comparison schools.

Students in SAGE schools outperformed students in comparison schools in every subject in every grade level (1st through 3rd grade) even though SAGE students started out the school year behind their peers in comparison schools. Students were tested in reading, language arts and mathematics.

Composite scores for 1st graders were 566.88 for SAGE students and 562.34 for students in comparison schools. For 2nd graders, the composite scores were 597.72 and 586.78. For 3rd graders, they were 623.42 and 615.29.

The evaluation report notes that teachers said the SAGE program allows them to give each student more individualized attention. Teachers also said the smaller class sizes have reduced the amount of time they have to devote to classroom discipline.

- Past SAGE evaluations (The new one will be posted soon)
- Resource page on SAGE
- SAGE Conference is March 6-7

Posted January 31, 2000

Link

Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation

2000-2001 EVALUATION RESULTS OF THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GUARANTEE IN EDUCATION (SAGE) PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

December 2001

Submitted by the SAGE Evaluation Team
School of Education
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

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CERAI-01-19

This document is available on the SAGE Website: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/sage.html

MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 2000-2001

The Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program is a statewide effort to

increase the academic achievement of children living in poverty by reducing the student-teacher ratio in kindergarten through third grade to 15:1. Schools participating in the SAGE program are also required to implement a rigorous academic curriculum, to provide before- and after-school activities for both students and community members, and to implement professional development and accountability plans. The SAGE evaluation is being conducted under contract with the Department of Public Instruction by the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

During the 1996–97 school year SAGE was implemented in 30 schools located in 21 school districts throughout the state of Wisconsin. It encompassed 80 kindergarten classrooms, 96 first-grade classrooms, and 5 mixed-grade classrooms enrolling 1,494 kindergarten and 1,723 first-grade students. Although SAGE was implemented in kindergarten classrooms, students in kindergarten were not tested. The effect of SAGE on kindergarten students is determined when they are tested as first-grade students the following year. In 1997-98, the SAGE evaluation added 1,541 students in 113 second-grade classrooms in the original 30 SAGE. In 1998-99, the SAGE evaluation was made up of 85 kindergarten, 89 first-grade, 83 second-grade and 88 third-grade classrooms enrolling 1,416 kindergarten, 1,525 first-grade, 1,446 second-grade and 1,531 third-grade students. In 1999-00, first-grade students were not evaluated. The 1999-00 SAGE evaluation was made up of second-grade and third-grade classrooms enrolling 1,636 and 1,611 students respectively. In 2000-01 first-grade and second-grade students were not tested. The 2000-01 SAGE evaluation involved 1,542 third-grade students in 93 SAGE classrooms.

To measure academic achievement, third-grade students in SAGE schools and in a group of Comparison schools were administered the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)* Complete Battery, Terra Nova edition, Level 13, Form A in the spring of 2001. Following is a summary of the major findings of (1) the achievement effect of class size reduction, (2) the analysis of SAGE classrooms and schools, and (3) questions for future analysis and discussion.

*This year the Milwaukee Public Schools adopted the Basic Multiple Assessments Plus test to test all third-grade students in the district. To avoid compromising the testing for both the SAGE Evaluation Project and the Milwaukee Public Schools, an agreement was reached to have the third-grade SAGE students in the Milwaukee Public Schools take the Basic Multiple Assessments Plus test during the SAGE testing window. The Basic Multiple Assessments Plus test contains more subtests than the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) used in the SAGE Evaluation; however, both tests are Level 13 Form A and are on the same scale.

The Achievement Effect of Class Size Reduction

Third Grade, 2000-01

- The SAGE achievement advantage persists. When scores are adjusted for pre-existing differences in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, attendance, and prior knowledge, a SAGE advantage from the beginning of first grade to the end of third grade is shown on all subtests. From the end of first grade to the end of third grade, a SAGE advantage is shown on all subtests. From the end of second grade to the end of third grade, a SAGE advantage is shown in the third-grade reading subtest (Pages 32-33, Tables 18-20).
- Adding students lowers the average performance of classrooms. Each student added to a classroom beyond the 15:1 SAGE student-teacher ratio results in a decrease of approximately one scale score point in the class average in all academic scores (Page 40, Tables 24-26).
- No significant differences in achievement gains were found between 15:1 and 30:2 classrooms (Page 43).

The Analysis of SAGE Classrooms and Schools

Findings regarding teaching from the 2000-2001 SAGE evaluation obtained from interviews and observations in selected second- and third-grade classrooms as well as data from the teacher and the principal questionnaires administered in all SAGE Schools reaffirmed and amplified previous findings.

- The major effect of reduced class size is increased individualization. When teachers have fewer students, they can attend to the needs of each student because they have greater knowledge of each student, they have more time for instruction resulting from reduced time spent on discipline, and they have greater enthusiasm for their work.
- The type of individualization that reduced class size engenders is increased teacher-student interaction in one-on-one situations, in small group tutoring, or in total class teaching. The understandings of individual students are constantly being elicited, displayed, and critiqued.
- In higher-achieving second- and third-grade classrooms, as in higher-achieving first-grade classrooms, the amount and type of individualization differ from those found in lower-achieving classrooms. Teachers in higher-achieving classrooms stress a full range of goals but emphasize

the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills, mostly through the use of explicit instruction. Time spend on instruction is maximized because a structured management system based on rules and routines is used and lessons are carefully planned and paced.

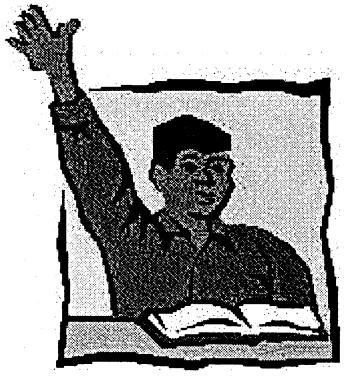
- In lower-achieving second- and third-grade classrooms, as in lower-achieving first-grade classrooms, the amount and time, and, in some cases, the type of individualization differs from that of higher-achieving classrooms, chiefly because of the student and lesson management that is used. All of the lower-achieving classrooms tended to use more permissive student management techniques and often displayed emergent, randomly sequenced lessons. Generally, first-grade teachers focused on more personal goals using experiential learning. Teachers in lower-achieving second- and third-grade classrooms had goals and methods more similar to the higher-achieving teachers.

Questions for Future Analysis and Discussion

Taken together, findings and analyses of student achievement and classroom data over the five-year span of the SAGE evaluation project point to a number of questions to be addressed in future studies:

- Does student mobility have a significant impact on achievement performance of students in SAGE classrooms?
- Does specialized professional preparation of teachers have an impact on the academic performance of classrooms?
- What types of staff development programs are most likely to augment the benefits of class size reduction?
- What are the lasting benefits to students of participation in the SAGE program in the early elementary grades?

Class Size Matters



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BENEFITS OF CLASS SIZE REDUCTION

Many studies have shown that if there is a "magic bullet" that raises the educational achievement of children, it is reducing class size, particularly in the early grades. As Alex Molnar of the University of Wisconsin recently concluded, "There is no longer any argument about whether or not reducing class size in the primary grades increases student achievement. The evidence is quite clear: It does." Why are smaller classes so effective in helping children learn?

-Reducing class size makes sure that increased expenditures get to the classroom, where they belong.

-Controlled studies from Tennessee, Milwaukee and elsewhere show that children who are in smaller classes score significantly higher in reading and math. The Tennessee class-size research, called STAR, reveals that children in all socio-economic groups benefit from being placed in smaller classes.

-Smaller classes especially benefit children from minority and low-income backgrounds who need more support. Results from Wisconsin reveal that low-income first graders in small classes score significantly higher in reading and math than similar students in larger classes. African-American males made the largest gains, with test scores 40% above the control group. In the Tennessee program, a 12% gap between white and black students in passing a first grade skills test was reduced to only 1% for those who were in smaller classes.

-The benefits of class size reduction in the early grades last throughout a student's educational career. The STAR research shows that students who had been placed in small classes in grades K-3 continue to outperform others right through high school, with higher graduation rates, higher grade point averages, and a greater likelihood to be headed towards college. In particular, attendance in small classes in the early grades cuts the gap between black and white students taking college entrance exams in half.

-As schools move towards higher standards, smaller classes are increasingly critical. Marc Tucker, the President of the National Center on Education and the Economy, considered the "guru" of standards-based education, calls for reducing the size of classes in grades K-2. Reduced class sizes are also important as teaching methods increasingly emphasize hands-on and individualized learning, rather than rote memorization.

-Smaller classes are a very cost-effective strategy to lower the number of students who have to repeat grades. In the Tennessee STAR study, 17% of inner-city students who had been

placed in small classes in the early grades were held back through the 9th grade, compared to 44% of those from similar backgrounds who had been put in regular sized classes.

-Smaller classes allow teachers to focus more on instruction and less on classroom discipline. Suspensions in three suburban Sacramento school district are down 19% since the state of California lowered class sizes in grades K- 3rd.

-Reduced class size enhances the communication between parents and teachers. Researchers have noted that parents with children in smaller classes follow-up with their teachers more frequently, and on a sustained basis.

-Smaller classes save money, because it prevents many unnecessary referrals into expensive special education programs. Teachers can identify children with special learning problems early and give them effective help in the regular classroom. In the same three California districts, referrals of students to special education have dropped 16 percent.

-Class size reduction raises children's educational achievement levels more than vouchers. In a recent study of the Milwaukee voucher program, Cecilia Rouse of Princeton University found that students who remained in public schools but in smaller classes made "substantially faster gains" in reading compared to those who used vouchers to transfer to private schools.

-Smaller class sizes in New York City will also keep more middle class families in the city rather than move to the suburbs, ensuring that they remain on the city's tax rolls. In California, smaller classes have caused parents to return to the public school system, after having earlier sent their children to private schools.

-Reducing class sizes in New York City will also help recruit highly qualified teachers to urban settings, rather than suburban schools where smaller classes are the norm. Smaller classes will also cause teachers to stay in the profession longer, because they won't burn out as easily.

It is for these and other reasons that more than 30 states have moved towards reducing class size. Surveys in states that have done so reveal that parents, teachers and principals are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the results, and convinced that it was well worth the cost.

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